



Thursday, January 18, 2018

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CCG to run surgery consultation after MP intervenes

HEALTH BOSSES OVERSEE GP PLAN

Report by Jamie Brassington

A CONSULTATION over the future of two Halesowen GP surgeries has been taken over by health bosses, after an MP raised concerns.

Plans are in the pipeline to close Tenlands Road Surgery and Coombswood Surgery in Halesowen and instead send patients to Halesowen Health Centre.

The consultation was being led by Stourside Medical Practice, which runs all three surgeries, to gather patients' views but now Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group has stepped in.

Halesowen and Rowley Regis MP James Morris, who is against the proposals, said: "I'm pleased that following complaints I made the local Clinical Commissioning Group have stepped in and called a halt to the current consultation. I was not convinced this was being done fairly."

"The CCG will now be doing the consultation themselves."

Patients were notified of the proposals in December when a letter was sent out by the medical practice.

Dr Ruth Hearn said in the letter: "General practice in the UK is in a state of crisis. According to NHS England figures, 92 practices closed in 2016. While 34 merged with other practices, the remainder shut completely."

Risk

"We would like to ensure that the service we offer is safe and stable and that we take the necessary steps to ensure that we are not at risk of closure."

"After a great deal of thought and consideration, we feel this is best achieved by bringing our services together under one roof."

Conservative MP Mr Morris met with patients and health officials at Evergreen Pharmacy earlier this month to hear their views.

A decision will be made following the CCG's consultation, which will last for six weeks.

Laura Broster, director of communications at the CCG, said: "It is really important that patients and members of the public are given the opportunity to have their say on the proposals."

"All of the feedback will be presented to the committee and we are really grateful for the responses."

BIKERS RALLY AROUND TO HELP THE HOMELESS



Leslie's Care Packages founder Vi Wood with members of the West Midlands Motorcycle Action Group during Sunday's ride out

KIND-HEARTED bikers braved the cold on a mass ride out from Halesowen in aid of a voluntary group for the homeless and vulnerable.

More than 60 riders took part in the West Midlands Motorcycle Action Group (MAG) Charity Run in aid of Stourbridge-based Leslie's Care Packages for the homeless.

Loaded up with hundreds of bags of essential provisions, riders set out en masse from Streetbike, Dudley Road, Halesowen on Sunday.

They hit the roads for the 20-mile run to

the Food Stop Café, near Bridgnorth, where they were greeted by Leslie's Care Packages founder, Vi Wood.

The voluntary group was set up by Vi in 2016 in loving tribute to her late husband Leslie, after she and her own family fell on difficult times. Since then, Vi has dedicated all her free time to helping people in need across the borough.

She said: "It was absolutely wonderful to see support from so many riders. Their amazing donations will help make such a difference to people's lives."

"I'm overwhelmed and can't thank them enough."

Leslie's Care Packages not only helps the homeless, but also those who face difficult times, providing much-needed provisions and practical hands-on support.

Now the group is on a mission to set up a special drop-in centre.

Vi added: "Homelessness isn't a choice, it can happen to any one of us at any time for a host of reasons."

Visit www.lesliescarepackages.org for more information.

FOOTBALL

Yeltz fans are urged to help save club

FANS are being urged to donate to a Crowdfunder page set up to help save Halesowen Town Football Club.

Chairman Karen Brookes has launched the page to help buy the club, which was founded in 1873, from its current owner and provide future financial stability.

More than £1,100 of the £30,000 target has so far been raised via the site.

See www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/halesowentown for details.

● Plea – See back page

TRIBUTES

Baggies in plan to honour 'Big Cyrille'

ALBION will be holding a major celebration of Cyrille Regis's life at their next home game at The Hawthorns.

Plans are being drawn up to honour the legendary striker when Southampton visit on Saturday, February 3.

The former Albion, Coventry, Villa and Wolves player died on Sunday, aged 59, after a suspected heart attack.

● Legend – Page 39

COURT

Megan's murder – man is convicted

A MAN has been found guilty of the murder of teenager Megan Bills, whose body was found in a wardrobe wrapped in cling-film.

Ashley Foster, 24, faces a life sentence after he was found guilty by a jury of killing 17-year-old Megan during a sick sex game. He had denied the charge but jurors found him guilty yesterday (Wednesday) at Wolverhampton Crown Court. Megan met her death in his room at Brierley Hill's New Horizons hostel on April 16.

● Last image of victim – page 5

INSIDE

IT'S STRICTLY FUN FOR ORE



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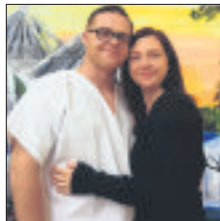
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Mother to marry jailed American 'lifer'



Emma with Justin Erskine

A 33-year-old mother from Stourbridge who fell in love with her American prison pen pal is set to marry him – despite the fact that he may never be released. Emma Pickett began writing to Justin Erskine last year after coming across his profile online and says he is the love of her life.

Erskine is serving a life sentence for first-degree murder without chance of parole. He was jailed for his role in the June 2006 killing of two men.

Erskine was found guilty of first-degree murder after being accused of giving a butterfly knife to a friend, who committed the killings. He then helped to bury the bodies in Maryland, according to reports.

Ms Pickett said she initially struck up a friendship with the murderer, who is being held in Delaware, as the pair bonded over poetry, books and music. But she soon found herself falling for the convicted criminal and the pair declared their love for another within weeks. She now plans to marry the lifer, aged 30.

The mother of three hopes to move

to the States along with her young children, who she says have a great relationship with the convict, who has no children himself.

She first flew out to visit him in September, when the couple shared their first kiss.

Care home worker Emma – who has been married once before – is in close contact with Erskine's family and has backed their attempt to fight his conviction, claiming he was coerced by others. The couple hope to get married later this year.

Special school is given 'outstanding' rating

A SPECIAL school in the Black Country has been rated outstanding by watchdog Ofsted.

The Westminster School in Rowley Regis was praised across the board.

It was ranked outstanding overall and in each of the five inspection categories – effectiveness of leadership and management; quality of teaching, learning and assessment; personal development, behaviour and welfare; outcomes for pupils; and 16 to 19 study programmes.

A report said leaders are committed to improving the life chances of pupils with special educational needs and 'aspects of the school's work on supported apprenticeships are at the forefront of national developments'.

The school's innovative work to support pupils to gain valuable employability skills through supported internships and apprenticeships was recognised as 'paving the way for other providers across the country'.

Improved

Inspectors found the school's effectiveness had improved in recent years thanks to 'the inspirational leadership of the head-teacher and the dynamism, enthusiasm and commitment of the senior team and governors'.

Pupils' behaviour was described as excellent, with the report adding: "Pupils embody the school's motto, Safe, Happy and Learning Together."

Inspectors also said 'teachers and support staff are highly skilled' and as a result 'pupils make strong progress in their learning...and personal development.' The school's post-16 provision was also praised for 'focusing sharply on making sure that students maximise their potential'.

The school's 7to97 social enterprise initiative, which aims to increase the proportion of young people with learning disabilities in the workplace, received praise for helping to boost students' self-esteem and confidence. The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare was particularly praised by inspectors.

Panto fun on the way... oh yes it is!



What's good for the goose is good for, from left to right, Matt Hickman, Chris Psaras and Krystin Wharton

A THEATRE group is giving a traditional tale an upbeat twist in its first production of the new year.

The Brierley Hill Musical Theatre Group is delivering its own special take on the popular pantomime story of Mother Goose with lots of songs and dance – and some performances already look likely to sell out.

Upbeat songs and dances will feature throughout the show which started last weekend and continues this weekend.

Joanne Gresswell, head of the production team, said: "It is a fun-filled family pantomime, something for everybody, from children to parents, to grandparents."

"We have been in rehearsal since September. We have got younger people who are in our chorus and they have all been very dedicated."

The theatre group was performing the show last weekend, when one of the performances at Brierley Hill Civic Hall was sold out, but will be back at the venue for

further shows today (Thursday), tomorrow and Saturday.

Panto fans will get to see good overcoming evil with the Fairy of Happiness taking on the evil Demon Discontent.

Joanne added: "The show does have a bit of a twist with the moral of it being that beauty is skin deep."

Tickets can be bought by calling 0845 6588095 or at the theatre group's www.bhmtc.co.uk website.

Holocaust survivor is guest speaker at service

A WOMAN who survived Nazi terror as a child during the 1930s and 40s, will be visiting Dudley to speak at the town's annual Holocaust Memorial Service.

In October 1938 Nazis rampaged through Eve Kugler's family home and shop, destroying many of her family's possessions. The family, targeted because they were Jews, fled their home in Germany the following year and hid in France. When the Nazis invaded France, Eve and her sister Ruth managed to escape to life with foster parents in America. Many of her relatives died.

Eve will be talking to hundreds of students and Dudley residents about her experiences at the commemoration event, organised by Dudley North MP Ian Austin and Dudley College Students' Union and with the support of the Holocaust Educational Trust.

Two school students who visited Auschwitz – the concentration camp that was set up in Nazi-occupied Poland – as part of the trust's Lessons from Auschwitz programme will be taking part in the event.

Religious leaders and Mayor of Dudley Councillor Dave Tyler will also take part.

The event is open to everyone at Dudley College's Broadway Campus at 12.30pm on January 26.

Sleeping on the streets for charity

A SLEEP-OUT in aid of one of the Mayor of Dudley's charities is being held next month.

Mayor Councillor Dave Tyler is appealing for others to join him on the sleep-out on February 9.

A number of sites have been earmarked, including the Savoy Centre in Netherton.

The mayor will be visiting all of the sites during the night. The event has been organised in conjunction with YMCA Open Door.

Councillor Tyler said: "This is such an important issue which affects lots of people. This event is about not only highlighting the plight of some of these people who find themselves on the streets, but also the excellent work of people at the YMCA Open Door project."

Nice comedy night at the rugby club

STOURBRIDGE Rugby Club is hosting a comedy evening tomorrow night (Friday), hosted by Dudley comedian Wayne Beese and headlined by Brummie comic Barbara Nice. The event from 7.30pm costs £20 including a two-course meal, call (01384) 395000 or 07989786913.

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Concern is raised over 'obese' staff at hospital

OBESEITY levels among nurses at a Dudley hospital need to be investigated, a top director has suggested.

Health bosses at Russells Hall Hospital have been advised to look at the issue of obesity among staff 'in a sensitive way'.

The comments were made by Richard Miner, a non-executive director at the Dudley Group NHS Trust, which runs Russells Hall, who pushed for action to ensure nurses were healthy. It comes following research which found one in four nurses nationally were classed as obese.

Minutes of a board meeting in December recorded Mr Miner asking for health experts to keep on top of the issue. A trust board report said: "Mr Miner, non-executive director, advised that he had raised the issue of obesity at a previous board and commented on the recently published research on obesity levels amongst nursing staff. "He suggested that this may be something for the workforce committee to look at in a sensitive way.

"The Director of Human Resources confirmed that part of the new HR manager's portfolio is to look at health and wellbeing of staff."

The spokeswoman said: "We don't believe we have an obesity problem among nursing staff or any other particular staff group. However, we continue to support our staff to make healthy choices."

Radio host Ed Doolan dies, 76

POPULAR Midland radio presenter Ed Doolan has died, aged 76. The BBC WM DJ died on Tuesday morning following a long battle with dementia.

Ed passed away peacefully in his sleep while at home in the early hours, his agent and manager Paul Vaughan confirmed. Ed's wife Christine was with him.

The Australian-born presenter and philanthropist began his radio career at Birmingham's BRMB (now Free Radio Birmingham) back in 1974.

He then moved on to Birmingham-based BBC WM in 1982.

Head of local and regional programmes for BBC West Midlands, David Jennings, described Ed as 'the people's champion'.

Comic in muddle

POPULAR comedian Jason Manford is bringing his new tour to Dudley. The Mancunian funnyman performs his 'Muddle Class' show at Dudley Town Hall on April 27, from 7.30pm. Tickets are £30.80 on (01384) 812812.

Shock for customers as travel firm closes

A TRAVEL company based in Stourbridge has unexpectedly closed and left its customers in the dark over pre-paid tickets.

Some have forked out hundreds of pounds to travel to London and Torquay this weekend.

Coach firm Group Travel Limited has closed its offices and customers have been unable to reach them by phone.

It comes after the company was set to be dissolved in December, only for a U-turn to be made the next day.

The tour operator was due to take passengers to the Royal Albert Hall in London tomorrow (Friday), with customers paying £165 for a ticket, and also to Torquay on Monday for a five-day break.

Catherine Wood, aged 81 from Brierley Hill, who was due to travel to London with her husband Raymond, 84, received a letter on Tuesday from the travel firm containing an 'urgent notice'.

The letter said: "We are sorry to advise you that your coach tour has been cancelled. We are currently taking legal advice from a licence insolvency practitioner and will send you a letter confirming our position in the next two weeks.

"Group Travel Ltd has ceased trading. You will be contacted in due course regarding the procedure for a refund. We apologise for any inconvenience caused."

Mrs Wood, who has used the company for years, said: "We are feeling upset and disappointed. We

bought two tickets to go to the Royal Albert Hall to Cirque Du Soleil, stay there and come back on Saturday. In total we paid £342.20 for two tickets, which includes £12.20 for insurance."

Grandparents Barry and Dorothy Austin from Codsall were looking forward to a relaxing mid-week break at the Riviera Hotel in Torquay but they experienced problems trying to get in touch with Group Travel Ltd and were led to believe their holiday was cancelled.

Retired Mr Austin, 81, said: "We've booked with them before and we've never had any problems. We've just paid the balance, £319 for the two of us."

The company's office in Audnam was closed this Monday and the firm was unavailable for comment.

Gambler jailed for using work phone and stealing

A PRODUCTION supervisor who backed a loser by using his firm's phone to gamble has started a 10-month prison sentence.

Allan Clarke, who had been employed by BMI Engineering for six years, ran up a bill of more than £1,000 in five months ringing gambling websites, a judge was told.

The 39-year-old resigned on the spot after being called in to discuss the calls when they were discovered in April, revealed Mr Andrew Wilkins, prosecuting.

Soon afterwards bosses at the Halesowen firm uncovered another fraud being operated by him, said Mr Wilkins.

Clarke had ordered more than £4,300 worth of power tools in the company's name but had kept and sold them himself.

In March 2010 he had been jailed for a year after stealing £30,000 worth of components from the business he worked for at the time and pocketed just £2,000 selling them for scrap.

Mr Exdol Mitchell, defending, told the court that Clarke's wife had left with their children for a week when their 14-year marriage hit trouble before she returned with an ultimatum that he stop betting.

Depressed

Mr Mitchell explained: "He was depressed and regrettably sought comfort in gambling by putting an app on his work mobile phone."

Clarke was also £6,500 in debt and was accused by Judge John Wait of not being honest when giving details of his finances and work record.

Clarke, of Beech Avenue, Halesowen, pleaded guilty to two charges of theft by an employee and was jailed by the Judge John Wait who said: "First you used your company phone to gamble and then went on to use their money to order power tools which you sold yourself. This was a serious breach of trust.

"Your position is significantly aggravated by your previous conviction for a similar offence.

"You have also been unable to give a clear and obvious account of your finances."

Terror attacks memorial proposed



How the memorial could look in Cannon Hill Park if work is given the go-ahead

ARTIST'S impressions have been unveiled for a memorial in Birmingham to honour victims of the Tunisia terror attacks.

The £750,000 project, planned for Cannon Hill Park, will honour victims of the 2015 attacks in Sousse and Bardo including Joel Richards, aged 19, from Wednesbury, his uncle Adrian Evans and grandfather Pat Evans. They were

on holiday in Sousse when gunman Seifeddine Rezgui opened fire, killing 38. Joel's younger brother Owen survived the attack.

The spot for the memorial has been chosen as the most appropriate for all the victims' families.

The centrepiece is a sculpture titled 'Infinite Wave' which is said to recreate a "single wave formed from 31 individual streams", each

one representing the British nationals who lost their lives.

The purpose of the memorial was to offer "a place of remembrance, commemoration and reflection for all those affected".

The memorial is due to open later this year if plans submitted to the city council by London-based George King Architects are given approval.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Roundhead boss is around again

HALESOWEN folk will get a chance to meet the Lord Protector himself, Oliver Cromwell, at St John's Church on Saturday.

The man who cost a king his head and ran Britain's shortlived republic in the 17th century, before becoming a dictator, will be brought back to life by actor and historian Max Keen in full costume for the 'Meet Oliver Cromwell' evening.

Church member Margaret Pickford said: "This should be a great evening so do come and join us." Tickets to the 7.30pm event cost £5 including refreshments and can be bought by calling 0121 501 2443 or on the door.

Channel 4 move supported by MP

AN MP has backed calls for Channel 4 to move to Birmingham – declaring it the best venue for the broadcaster.

John Spellar, Labour MP for Warley, joins West Midlands Mayor Andy Street and Peaky Blinders writer Steven Knight in urging the Government to move the channel to the Second City.

Mr Spellar said: "Moving Channel 4 to Birmingham makes a lot of sense and will bring additional high-skilled jobs to the West Midlands."

"It is right that public broadcasters become less London-centric."

Murder charges after stabbing

A 20-year-old man and a 17-year-old boy were due to appear at Wolverhampton Crown Court this week charged with the murder of Jaskaran Kang.

The 24-year-old was found fatally stabbed in a flat above the Mini Mart in Stourbridge Road, Dudley on January 6.

Reggie Salmon, of Stourbridge Road, and the teenager from Newcastle-Under-Lyme – who cannot be named for legal reasons – have both been charged with murder. Both defendants were remanded in custody.

Albion coaching link with China launched

WEST Bromwich Albion is setting up a grassroots community programme in China to seek out and train talented players and coaches.

The project is linked with the Baggies' owners, a group of Chinese investors who bought the club from former chairman Jeremy Peace 18 months ago. The club is advertising for four coaches to work in schools and communities in China. Applications close at noon on January 25.

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Black Country's car cruise ban is extended until 2021

AN INJUNCTION banning car cruising in the Black Country has been extended by three years by the High Court.

The court order stops people from taking part in a car cruise anywhere within Wolverhampton, Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall – or promoting, organising or publicising any such event in those areas.

Since it was introduced in 2015, 17 people have been convicted of breaching the injunction, either by taking part in or organising a car cruise, and have received suspended prison sentences, been fined up to £1,000 and ordered to pay court costs.

Four in court over a fatal fall from car

FOUR people have appeared in court over the death of a woman who fell from the bonnet of a car in a supermarket car park.

Ellie Underhill, 20, died a week after suffering head injuries at Tesco Extra, on Birmingham Road, Dudley, on Boxing Day 2016.

Luke Hickman, 19, of Wassell Road, Wollscote, is accused of unlawfully killing her. He appeared before magistrates in Walsall last week charged with manslaughter.

Ross Bingham, 20, of Hagley Road, Edgbaston; Elly Phillips, 19, of Seymour Road, Wollscote; and Hana Edwards, 18, of Grove Road, Wollscote, are charged with conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. No pleas have been entered. They were given bail. They must appear at Wolverhampton Crown Court on February 7.

The four Black Country boroughs, led by Wolverhampton Council and West Midlands Police, successfully sought a continuation of the injunction until February 1, 2021, at the Birmingham District Registry of the High Court last week.

His Honour Judge McKenna, sitting as a High Court judge, said: "The measures are reasonable and proportionate and I am content to extend the order for another three years."

Dangerous

Councillor Paul Sweet, Wolverhampton Council's cabinet member for health and wellbeing, said: "Car cruising is noisy, dangerous and illegal, causing damage to property and posing a risk of injury – or worse – to participants and the general public alike. It also takes up a lot of valuable time for our hard-pressed emergency services."

"Since its introduction in 2015, the injunction has helped to dramatically reduce the menace of car cruising across the Black Country, eliminating it altogether in certain areas. However, the problem has not been entirely eradicated."

Ironmaster's old home to be demolished



Hatherton Lodge will be bulldozed despite a campaign to save the Victorian building at Drews Holloway

THE former home of a man credited with bringing chain-making to the West Midlands will be bulldozed to make way for new homes – despite calls from heritage campaigners to save the property in Cradley.

Hatherton Lodge, once owned by Noah Hingley, will be pulled down to make way for seven new houses following a decision by Dudley Council's planning committee. It comes despite 97 objections made against the plans.

James Warwick, who founded Facebook group Save Hatherton Lodge which had around 470 members, said: "The decision is disappointing."

Dudley Council said all options had been explored to try to save the derelict building in Drews Holloway.

Mr Hingley, who lived in the house during the 19th century, owned Netherton-based ironworks N Hingley & Sons which made the anchor for the Titanic.

At the planning meeting, chairman Councillor Andrea Goddard initially recommended a site visit but committee members felt it would take too much time and money to bring the house back from its current poor state. It has been empty for years.

Council officer Helen Yorke said: "Every single avenue has been explored to save the property." The committee voted against a site visit and then voted for demolition.

Storage plan at former steel site

A FORMER landmark industrial site near Merry Hill shopping centre could be demolished to make way for a storage base.

The Sun Works plant would be taken over by the self-storage company Safestore Holdings to create units to rent. The site has been derelict since steel firm Bird Stevens went into administration in March 2016.

There are a total of 16 buildings on site that were used for the manufacture and fabrication of metalwork together with materials storage, loading areas and car parking.

Councillor Jackie Cowell, who represents the Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood wards, said that she would welcome something 'constructive' being done with the site.

"I have seen a document put forward for the plans, which is good because it has been a considerable amount of time that the site has stood empty now."

"Derelict buildings and sites like this do not much for the environment or the local businesses and if it can be turned to better use instead of sitting there then that is something we would welcome. It may also bring more people to the area, which is a plus. We will see how it goes at committee, but it seems to be a constructive idea."

A decision is expected soon.

Hedge your bets with rural craft

FOLK can learn a traditional country craft in Dudley. Friends of Wrens Nest National Nature Reserve are organising a hedgelaying event. There will be tuition from the Dudley reserve's wardens on Saturday, February 20, from 10.30am to 12.30pm. Places are limited and for the over-16s only. Contact 07854 539411.

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Public split over new homes on Green Belt

A POLL has found support for new housing being built in the West Midlands' Green Belt.

With Birmingham needing to deliver more than 80,000 new homes by 2031, and with both the Government and local authorities facing increasing pressure to release land for new homes, almost one in two people would support such development.

The survey of 1,000 people, conducted by independent national polling company Censurise and commissioned by Snapdragon Consulting, saw 49.1 per cent of respondents in the West Midlands saying they would support building on Green Belt land to meet demand for homes, compared to 52.3 per cent nationally.

The figure grew to 74.1 per cent when people were asked if they would support development on a previously developed Green Belt site, which could include agricultural buildings, parking or airstrips.

Land designated as Green Belt is currently granted protection, from new development to prevent urban sprawl around cities across the country. With large swathes of land around Birmingham designated as Green Belt, much of the region is currently out of bounds for developers. Support for Green Belt development is strongest amongst 16 to 24-year-olds, who are struggling with affordability and availability of housing.

No accident – killer is guilty of Megan's murder

MURDERER Ashley Foster faces a life sentence after he was found guilty by a jury of killing 17-year-old Megan Bills during a sick sex game.

Foster repeatedly refused to tell police or prosecutors exactly how Megan met her death in his room at the New Horizons hostel for ex-offenders in in Highgate Road, Brierley Hill, on April 16, Easter Sunday, last year – and declined to give evidence during his trial.

Foster hid the body in a wardrobe that was deliberately wrapped in cling film to speed decomposition of the corpse. The state it was in when found almost three weeks later made it impossible to pinpoint the exact cause of death.

He had denied the charge but jurors found him guilty yesterday (Wednesday) at Wolverhampton Crown Court.

The killer had insisted in a letter to his mother that the death of a teenage girl while they had sex was an accident.

Miss Jane Bickerstaff QC, defending Ashley Foster, told Wolverhampton Crown Court that he was contemplating suicide when he penned the note after his arrest following the discovery of the body of 17-year-old Megan.

Conscience

The lawyer said: "He was clearing his conscience thinking he would never see his mother again."

Foster, aged 24, had been freed from jail three days earlier and had met Megan for the first time hours before they had sex, the court heard. He insisted in the letter: "She tells me she likes to be strangled so I obliged...she loved it...but then as I released her, her eyes closed."

Miss Bickerstaff continued in her summing up: "It was consensual sex. Why on earth would he want to kill or harm her?"

Mr Crispin Aylett QC, prosecuting, told the jury: "Foster has provided you with nothing more than lies, self pity and cowardice. The letter to his mother is not a truthful account but he does not have a better one. The truth is he murdered her."

"He was playing out his sexual fantasy and strangling her was part of that. He could have released his hold any time but just kept the pressure on until he had finished."



Megan Bills talking with Ashley Foster, the man convicted of her murder at the hostel in Brierley Hill



Megan first met Foster a few hours before she died



The last known image of Megan before she was killed

NEWS IN BRIEF

MP looks at work of homeless team

DUDLEY North MP Ian Austin visited Dudley Council's Homelessness team to see the work they carry out and learn more about the 'No Second Night Out' policy, which means people sleeping rough are offered emergency accommodation and support.

Mr Austin said: "People in Dudley have been shocked at the increase of people sleeping rough in the town, so I spent a few hours with Dudley Council's Homelessness team hearing about their work to help."

People in need of urgent help if made homeless can contact the Homelessness Prevention and Response team by calling 0300 555 2345.

Have Faith in tribute to George

TICKETS for a George Michael tribute show at Dudley Town Hall have gone on sale. Faith – The George Michael Legacy will be at the venue on March 3 at 7.30pm.

It is billed as a musical journey through more than 30 years of hits, from Wham to the late singer's solo career and uses actual video footage from the George Michael 25 Live tour.

The audience can expect to hear songs such as Club Tropicana, I'm Your Man, Faith, Careless Whisper and Freedom. Tickets cost £21.50. To book call 01384 812812.

Richardsons in joint warehouse venture

DEVELOPERS the Richardson family have taken on two new industrial warehouse schemes in Redditch and Kettering. Oldbury-based Richardsons, which developed Merry Hill, has formed a joint venture with Warwickshire's St Francis Group. One of the projects is Velocity 42 at Park Farm Industrial Estate in Redditch.

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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews



Can I help you? Yes I'm being robbed . . .

FOR those of you who thought the thin blue line had been getting a little too thin for comfort lately, here's something to gladden the heart.

Police in Lancashire say that by the end of the year people could soon have their own virtual bobby in the home.

The gadgets will not only make regular announcements about crime-fighting operations – which I am sure will never become irritating – they will also allow people to report crimes via voice-activated technology. Which means they can employ fewer call-handlers. Yippee.

Have the brains behind this ever used a voice-activated service? My credit card provider has just switched to one for bill payments, and let's say the results have been mixed. A call that previously took a couple of minutes "press two to pay your bill, enter your debit card number" ended up taking a quarter of an hour and four separate calls, probably in part because I don't speak hologram fluently.

Can you imagine how this might work in an emergency?

"Help, I'm being robbed!"
"Hello Rob, how may I help you?"
"A robber has a knife to my throat!"
"Yes, Rob, your wife is allowed to vote. Say 'yes' if you would like another service, if not, say 'I am done'."

At this rate, we're all well and truly done.

□ □ □

ALSO facing a shortage of personnel is the British Army, which has also reverted to, shall we say, unconventional means, to fill the gap.

It's strange, because it only seems like a couple of years ago that the Army was making thousands of experienced, battle-hardened soldiers redundant, closing down the Staffordshire Regiment.

Anyway, the corporate whizzkids have decided that the old "Be the Best" recruitment slogan was outdated and elitist. Can't discriminate against people who don't want to be the best, can we?

As a replacement, the Army has come up with some soppy online videos that look a bit like the opening credits for the Generation Game during Bruce's second stint, circa 1990. They encourage would-be recruits to talk about their feelings, and say it's all right to cry if you're upset.

Brilliant. So next time the Argentinians, Putin, Isis, or whoever our enemies are these days decide they want another war, and deploy a load of hard nuts to blow our heads off, we retaliate with a group of people in touch with their emotional side.

They'll probably use It Ain't Half Hot Mum as a training video.

Gear up and sort out these tyre-bursting roads



Theresa May – the recent reshuffle was underwhelming but made a point



Tony Blair – a number of words sprang to mind, 'clever' was never one of them



Keir Starmer – looking anxious following announcement of rapist release?

Drivers in a hole as planning falls short

I CANNOT recall such a vicious crop of tyre-bursting, wheel-bending, suspension-cracking potholes on our roads as we have now. It must have something to do with hard frosts followed by heavy rain, plus the fact that no-one in authority ever seems to expect such weather in a British winter, let alone plan for it.

OUR changing language. Yes, I know it's a real word but I'd never heard it before. The God-botherer on Thought for the Day (Radio 4) referred to the faith of those who believe the end of the world is nigh. It is called Apocalypticism. Now, there's a real denture tester.

A READER who believes Brexit will never happen writes: "Brexit is merely a bar-room drunk's xenophobic fantasy . . . Remainers will prevail because we have common sense, truth, peace, patriotism and the social good as our arguments." And humility. Don't forget the humility.

THE anti-Brexit movement, led by Lord Adonis, Gina Miller, Tony Blair and the others, is based on the unspoken, but heavily implied, belief that these people are much cleverer than the rest of us. I cannot speak for them all but I have interviewed Tony Blair several times. Although a number of words sprang to mind, "clever" was never one of them.

BY the end of this year, smacking children will probably be illegal in Wales and Scotland. This offers some interesting business opportunities on England's western and northern borders. I

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



foresee a string of cosy little franchises (Slippers-R-Us?) where Scots and Welsh parents can bring their errant offspring for a taste of traditional discipline and regale them with stories of how "we all got it in the old days and it never did me any harm."

MORE to the point, when slapping is banned across the UK, as it surely will be, what happens next? The approved alternatives to smacking, as preached by the great and good, are confining a child to its bedroom or confiscating its favourite toy. Or to put it another way, imprisonment without trial, and theft. One for the human-rights lawyers.

AFTER my recent item on prostate examinations, a reader tells me of a GP who uses two fingers, in case he needs a second opinion.

A COMEDIAN in the 1980s announced details of Margaret Thatcher's latest cabinet reshuffle. Apparently, Thatcher had moved the blue Wedgwood pot behind the little china dog. The recent reshuffle by Theresa May was just as underwhelming and didn't even have a punchline. But it did make the point, as May sacked middle-aged ministers for being "male, pale and stale," as the BBC put it, that it is perfectly pos-

sible in these enlightened times to be sacked for being the wrong gender, colour or age.

SOME of the victims of the black-cab rapist John Worboys are demanding that when he is freed from prison he should be excluded from London. And if the worst happened and Worboys struck again in the provinces, who would explain to the victims in Wales, Whitby or Wolverhampton that a rapist was unleashed in their midst to make London safer?

WHY was the normally cool Labour front-bencher Keir Starmer so agitated and anxious in his interview following the announcement that Worboys was due for release? Starmer's only involvement with the case is that at the time, nine years ago, he was Director of Public Prosecutions when it was decided to charge Worboys with only a dozen offences. His lawyers probably took the view that adding many more similar cases to the charge sheet would not result in a longer prison sentence. So it was a pragmatic, logical decision. The snag for Starmer is that in the intervening nine years sex offences against women have become centre-stage. Logic is not what it was. We now have a febrile culture in which a single ill-judged email or a wandering male hand 10 years ago is enough to end a political career. Starmer knows that he will survive the current scandal, so long as nothing more happens. But what if Worboys is released and offends again? In the present climate, illogical and unfair though it may seem, Keir Starmer could find his head on the block. No wonder he looked worried.

TALKING POINT



Weathering storm of American influence

POLITICIANS love to tell us that Britain has a special relationship with the United States – and it seems that includes the weather.

Avid watchers of weather forecasts will be well aware that storms these days are given human names, apparently to raise awareness so that people can take urgent action and batten down the hatches as severe winds and rain approach.

The Met Office, in conjunction with Ireland's Met Éireann, announced the storm names for the 2017-18 season in September, and already we've had Aileen, Brian, Caroline, Dylan and Eleanor.

In anticipation of a particularly bad season, a number of names have been chosen in alphabetical order. So far, so good, but a graphic on the Met Office website illustrates some glaring omissions in the naming process – which is where the American influence comes in.

Instead of using all 26 letters of the alphabet, Q, U, X, Y and Z have not been allocated a name. At first glance, it's easy to assume the Met Office had difficulty in choosing names for those five letters.

However, the actual reason they are not included is – and I quote the Met Office's small print – "this ensures we are in line with the US National Hurricane Centre naming convention and will maintain consistency for official storm naming in the North Atlantic".

So there we are. Our storm-naming system is at the mercy of American weather experts.

Maybe a campaign could be started to have those five lonely letters included after all. In true British spirit, the Talking Point team set about thinking up how to fill the gaps.

We came up with Quentin, Una, Xavier, Yul and Zach, and we'd like to think they are more sensible than some of the suggestions submitted to the Met Office.

How seriously could you take the news that Storm Gnasher was on the way? Or how about Baldrick, NastyBoy, Skylab, Stomp, Swoosh or Twizzle? Not surprisingly, the names of retailers such as B&Q and Asda were also excluded.

Looking back, the 2016-17 season saw five storms named, from Angus to Ewan. In the previous season, 11 were named, from Abigail to Katie.

Obviously, no-one can tell how many names will be needed this season – as few as possible, if we are lucky.

So despite the Americans taking over in this instance, perhaps we should be hoping that we don't get as far as those missing letters.

STEVE PARLETT

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Winter ban on non-emergency ops to help

THE hospital crisis this year is worse than last year which was worse than the year before, and so on.

To ease the problem all non-emergency operations have been cancelled.

That means that there are people that have geared themselves up and made arrangements for the operation date that will have to go through it all again at a later date.

This must also cause some disruption

Rotary Club thanks for donations

ON behalf of the Rotary Club of Sedgley & Wombourne, assisted by Wombourne 3rd Scouts Group, we would like to thank everyone who contributed so generously to our annual house-to-house collections during December.

Additionally, our sincere thanks goes to the patrons of Sainsbury's Wombourne, Ashwood Garden Centre and ASDA Sedgley, where we also had a static presence accompanied by Santa's sleigh.

We are delighted to report we raised a magnificent total of just over £6,746.

This wonderful achievement enables us to continue our important work of supporting the many charities with whom we continue to be associated. A breakdown shows £1,514 was donated in Sedgley, £2,104 in Wombourne with a further £3,128 at our static collections at Ashwoods Garden Centre, ASDA Sedgley and Sainsbury's.

M H KERRIDGE
Rotary Club of Sedgley & Wombourne President

tion with the theatre staff and administration departments, but I'm sure most people would accept that is a price worth paying to help others who have urgent needs.

As this is a problem that is unlikely to get any better this time of the year – or any December/January in any year in the near future – could it not be possible for hospitals to keep December/January every year free of non-urgent operations by not making appointments?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Dudley Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
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Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

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story, write to The Editor, Chronicles, 51-53 Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

Enough worries without charges

I DON'T think people rant about hospital parking charges. I haven't read any complaints about a reasonable fee being charged at all. I think many people are rightly annoyed by the rate of fees charged by some hospitals like Russells Hall, where you turn up for appointments, are invariably kept waiting for hours after the appointment time, knowing that the charges are approaching over £5 per visit.

If you're using a city car park you are there for a purpose, to use the facilities provided by that city for your own pleasure. If you're using a hospital car park, you either have a health problem or are visiting someone who has, in which case you already have a problem, why should this be added to by car parking fee worries?

CHRIS BAKER
Halesowen

Apology is not enough Mrs May

THERESA May seems to think an apology will cure all that's wrong with the NHS. Wrong again Mrs May, the NHS is now in critical condition after your Government's constant cuts and manipulation of figures.

We have frazzled staff, working at breaking point, elderly patients slumped in corridors without any means of keeping warm, or of being looked at. Stroke patients stuck in ambulances instead of seeing a doctor. We now have corridor treatment instead of A&E.

What a disgrace. You're even trying to blame the head of the NHS for the problems.

Resign now, we are all fed up with your pathetic excuses.

Our NHS staff are the best you could ask for but the Conservative Party are treating them like modern day slaves. God help us in 2020 if this shower is still in power – we will have pay as you go NHS.

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It's a happy ending for Elsa back from the brink



On the road to a full recovery – Elsa with Lin Reeves from the Animal House Rescue Centre

A DOG which has battled back from the brink of death after being abandoned warmed the hearts of more than 400 people during a special 'meet and greet' event.

Elsa the French mastiff has become something of a star after her story went viral online.

She was thought to be just hours from death when found at Corngreaves Nature Reserve in Cradley Heath but she is now well on the road to recovery.

The desperately thin dog was rescued and taken in by the Animal House Rescue Charity, which is run by volunteers in Sandwell, and given emergency treatment. She is now living with a foster family in South Staffordshire.

Animal lovers were invited to come and meet Elsa, who is now looking much healthier and happier weeks from her ordeal, at Your Vets in Smethwick, where she was cared for after being passed on by the rescue charity.

There were scenes akin to a celebrity appearance as visitors queued

at the door to catch a glimpse of the much-loved dog.

She now weighs 34kg – double that of when she was found on death's door at the nature reserve.

Elsa, who is aged around three or four, was given her nickname because she was found 'frozen'. Charity volunteer Sue Hodges said: "We invited people to come down and meet her following the story which, through Facebook and the Express & Star, has gone worldwide. We had a lot of people who said they wished they could come and be with her so we decided to invite them in."

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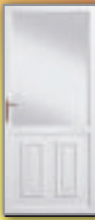
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Thousands of jobs put at risk by the Carillion crash

A SHOCKWAVE was sent through the business community and political world when on Monday Wolverhampton-based construction giant Carillion went into compulsory liquidation.

Last ditch efforts over the weekend, involving talks between the company, its lenders and the Government, failed to secure a rescue deal. The result is that a company with its roots in the Black Country going back more than a century will now be broken up.

More time to have say on transit site

A PUBLIC consultation launched to determine residents' views on the development of a temporary travellers' transit site has been extended.

Launched in December the consultation was due to conclude on January 19 but Dudley Council have pushed the deadline back to the final day of the month.

But the move to bring in a three-year temporary transit site in the borough has received strong backlash from ward councillors who say the preferred site, Budden Road in Coseley, is contaminated land.

Coseley East ward councillor Susan Ridney said: "If we're not prepared to even put a football pitch on there how can we put caravans with babies and children on there."

Sites in Lye and Dudley are also being considered.

Less than a year after announcing revenues of over £5 billion the company has crashed. The fate of its 19,500-strong UK workforce, including around 400 at its city centre headquarters on the Ring Road St Marks in Wolverhampton, hangs in the balance.

Contracts

Many will be hoping they can be switched to new companies that take over the scores of contracts the company has for work on road, rail and Government departments. There are fears that thousands face redundancy.

It is unclear what the immediate impact will be on projects such as the Midland Metropolitan Hospital at Smethwick, which Carillion has been building for Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals Trust.

Health chiefs have said the project is not at risk but the collapse of Carillion will almost certainly add to the year-long delays already affecting the work.

There was 'no comment' from scores of staff arriving for work at Carillion House in Wolverhampton this week but the shock on many faces was clear.

Carillion, which employs more than 40,000 worldwide, was created in 1999 out of the de-merger of the Tarmac Group.

● For the latest information see www.expressandstar.com website.

Museum focus on photo competition



Sheila Chamberlain-Hyett and Edward Miller provide photographic inspiration at the Black Country Living Museum

GRAB a camera and get snappy as the Black Country Living Museum is set to stage a special photography exhibition later this year.

It comes as part of the attraction's 40th anniversary celebrations. It is inviting people to submit four new and archive photographs on the theme of Reclaiming Our Industrial Might.

The deadline for entries is February 23 and a selection of the images will be on display at the museum in Tipton

Road for its Industrial Might weekend on May 19 and 20.

Submissions need to feature the Black Country's industrial heritage including forges, boilers collieries and factories.

Digital

Portraits, architectural shots and present day street photographs are also welcomed, but images taken at the museum cannot be included. Digital

photographs can also be submitted for the display.

People whose photos are chosen will be contacted within eight weeks of the closing date.

During the Industrial Might weekend, visitors can discover the awe-inspiring industry of the Black Country and it will be jam-packed with live demonstrations and fun for all ages.

To submit photographs go to reclaimphotographyfestival.org website.

Loose nut is costly error for garage

AN MOT centre and its directors have been handed a court bill of almost £5,000 after a vehicle that had been serviced caught fire on an M42 slip road.

Jennings MOT Centre Ltd, in Simms Lane, Netherton, carried out a service to the rear brakes and bearings of the Fiat 130 motorhome.

The vehicle was being driven on the M42 when the driver experienced problems and stopped on the slip road. Minutes later the rear left wheel became detached from the vehicle and the motorhome caught fire.

The fire service was called and had to partially close the motorway. They concluded that the cause of the fire was friction and heat build-up in the wheel or brakes.

The motorhome was examined by an independent vehicle examiner who found that the left rear wheel hub nut hadn't been secured properly, causing the bearing to become loose and over-heat, causing the fire and the loss of the wheel, 'a result of poor workmanship by the repairer'.

Trading standards team led the prosecution at Dudley Magistrates. The company and its two directors, Taseem Farooq and Waqar Farooq pleaded guilty to offences under the Road Traffic Act 1988 and The Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008.

The company was fined a total of £2,000 and ordered to pay £520 costs and a £220 victim surcharge. The two directors were fined £500 each, and both were ordered to pay £520 costs and £50 victim surcharge. Magistrates said that the failure could have had far more serious consequences.

Councillor Peter Miller, cabinet member for health and wellbeing said: "We will not hesitate to take action against traders who put lives at risk by returning vehicles in a condition which would involve a danger of injury to the driver or other road users."

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Aphrodite Rising from the Waves sold for £84,000

Aphrodite glassware provides a beautiful moment for auctioneer

AN AUCTIONEER has described the sale of a rare glass plaque made in Stourbridge as the highlight of his career.

Will Farmer, director at Fieldings Auctioneers in Stourbridge, said he was left 'touched by the heaving crowds' at Saturday's sale of George Woodall's Aphrodite Rising from the Waves, which sold for £84,000.

Mr Farmer said: "It was absolutely fantastic. It came down to two specific buyers who fought it out who were

both looking for it for their collections. "It is going to stay here in the UK. There were a lot of people from the glass community, historians, collectors - I was really touched actually. There were a lot of people there to witness the moment and by the time we came to sell the lot the room was heaving.

"To date it was a career highlight for me, it is the most important piece of glass we have been asked to handle.

"The family were in the room and I started by saying it was an honour

and privilege. I think it was a very nice sentiment that the piece that was made half a mile up the road was being sold here. That is a large statement for the region and the fact we are more than capable of handling an intentionally important piece of glass."

Other high earning items in Saturday's auction included a set of Chinese opium pipes estimated at £4,000 but going for £27,000, an Alvis TD21 Series II Drophead Coupe motor from 1963 which fetched £27,000.

£3,500 is raised by hospice's 'treecycle'

A WEEKEND of Christmas tree collections has brought in more than £3,500 for Mary Stevens Hospice.

Fundraisers spent the first weekend of 2018 travelling between DY5 to DY9 post codes collecting Christmas trees from outside of supporters' homes in exchange for a donation towards the care of the families relying on the Stourbridge hospice.

In order to meet the hugely increased demand, the hospice received support from volunteers and local corporate supporters, including Enterprise Van Hire.

All the trees were taken to Hagley Christmas Trees, who have done the recycling. Bookings have re-opened on the hospice's website for 2019, with some supporters already securing their slot for next year. See www.marystevenshospice.co.uk/event/christmas-treecycle-2019 for further details.

Security has to be tighter at pub after man injured

Report by Annabal Bagdi

BOSSSES at a Stourbridge town centre pub have been forced to tighten-up security after a vicious brawl erupted at the venue.

Stourbridge's Bell Hotel came under scrutiny after a customer was left with serious injuries at the Market Street pub in October. But police were unable to prosecute as CCTV at the pub had been switched off and staff failed to alert emergency services.

Dudley councillors have agreed that the premises can remain open but said pub bosses must follow a set of stringent conditions made by police.

Speaking at Dudley council's licensing sub-committee, Stourbridge town centre's Councillor Nicholas Barlow said: "I think the concerns that have been raised highlight there has been a failure to understand the obligations that staff have. In my view, ignorance is no excuse."

West Midlands Police requested the pub's licence be reviewed after an altercation broke out in the pub on October 22. The victim needed hospital treatment after being assaulted with a glass or bottle in the early hours of the morning.

Door staff removed people from the pub and members of the public and the operator of the council's CCTV calling emergency services when a fight then began in the street.

The force's licensing and regulatory officer Donna Jenkins said the attack was not captured on CCTV as the system had failed to record anything since August 24. She said a female suspect was arrested at the scene, adding: "During this time, no call was made by the venue to the police. Without CCTV, this incident can't be progressed."

Mrs Jenkins went on to say it became clear during a follow-up meeting that the pub supervisor had 'no understanding of the licensing obligations' or staff responsibilities.

Karen Cochrane, representing Marstons, which took over the pub last January, said the incident was a one-off and the company had since changed its supervisor.

Pub staff must now comply with 11 conditions, including having a CCTV system which is satisfactory to the police and getting at least two members of door staff to wear body cameras. Drinks cannot be served in a glass after 11pm, there must be a first aider on site and bag and body searches must take place on entering.

The pub's licence allows it to serve alcohol and hold entertainment until 2am Thursday to Sunday, until midnight Monday to Wednesday.

Fright fans meet stars at horror convention

A TWO-DAY event for fans of horror film and books is being held next month.

Birmingham Horror Con is running at Warwickshire County Cricket Club's Edgbaston Stadium in Birmingham on February 24 and 25. Five of the original cast of Stephen King's 1990 TV mini-series *It* are attending. There will be stalls featuring memorabilia, opportunities to get autographs and photographs taken with the stars, plus film screenings over the weekend. Tickets can be booked at www.horrorconbirmingham.com/tickets website.

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City road where six people died set for safety measures

SAFETY measures could be brought in on a road where six people were killed in a horror crash.

Council leaders in Birmingham have pledged to take action to ensure drivers slow down on Lee Bank Middleway following the horrific smash which took place days before Christmas.

Preet Gill, who as well as being a Sandwell councillor is also a Birmingham MP (for Erdington), insisted 'lessons must be learned' following the crash.

Police name stab victim as man held

POLICE have named the victim of a fatal stabbing in a bookmaker's in Birmingham. Khalid Yousef, aged 28, from Handsworth, was pronounced dead at the scene on Thursday January 4 at 12.45pm.

A 35-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of murder and has been detained under the Mental Health Act.

Det Insp Jim Colclough, from the force's homicide team, said: "Our investigation is making good progress but I would like to hear from anyone who may have information but hasn't already spoken to us. Every bit of information is vital to our investigation and I would urge anyone who can help to contact my team on 101."

Khalid's family continue to be supported by specially trained officers and are being fully updated with the latest developments.

Taxi driver Imtiaz Mohammed, aged 33, his two passengers, Lucy Davis, 43, and boyfriend Lee Jenkins, 42, died as the vehicle was left on its side by the force of the crash.

Three men, Kasar Jehangir, 25, Tauqeer Hussain, 26, and 30-year-old Mohammed Fasha, were thrown from the other car involved and also died. Another was seriously injured.

Investigations are continuing but politicians in the second city agree speed is an issue on the main route which leads under Bristol Road towards the heart of the city.

Birmingham City Council leader Ian Ward said: "This was a horrific and heartbreaking incident and it's absolutely essential that we understand the factors that contributed to such a tragic loss of life."

Ms Gill said: "The people of Birmingham were left stunned by this horrific incident and six people tragically lost their lives."

"Lessons must be learned and I welcome Birmingham City Council's commitment to improving safety once the investigations are complete. In the meantime, I'll be talking to the council about the potential for interim safety measures. I've made it absolutely clear that action must be taken to reduce the risk of future crashes on this stretch of road."

Kicking off for more football in Sandwell

PLANS have been announced for more fun football sessions across Sandwell in 2018 to help people get more active.

This will build on the success of a fun football scheme set up last year in Friar Park, Wednesbury, which is helping local people to get fit and lose weight.

Football Association Just Play schemes will run in each of Sandwell's six towns and will be set up by the spring. These will include sessions for dads and mums, men who want to lose weight and women and girls aged 14-plus.

Sandwell Council cabinet member Councillor Paul Moore said: "This is a great opportunity for people to have fun and get active."

"I am pleased we will be setting up football sessions in each of our six towns this year."

"People may not have the time, money or interest to be part of affiliated football. With Just Play, they can have fun, improve confidence, boost their fitness and see where it takes them."

Footie for Fitness at Pulse Wednesbury in Friar Park Road started in June last year and has proved very popular with those who want lose weight and get active.

An Albion Foundation coach runs a football session and boot camp-style fitness and gives advice on weight management.



Councillor Paul Moore with project organisers including project lead Lauren Cheshire and some of the participants from the Friar Park Footie for Fitness programme

Keep an eye out for Just Play sessions in Sandwell over the coming months at justplay.thefa.com or you can contact your local community activity development officer: Oldbury – megan_smith@sandwell.gov.uk;

Tipton/Wednesbury – katie_deeley@sandwell.gov.uk; Rowley Regis – matt_hill@sandwell.gov.uk; Smethwick – ricky_byrnes@sandwell.gov.uk; West Bromwich – eilish_ocallaghan@sandwell.gov.uk

Cemeteries nearer to getting CCTV

FURTHER steps to see CCTV brought into all cemeteries across Sandwell have been taken – as costings are set to be completed within a month.

The financial reports are being collected as Sandwell Council look to implement CCTV at all of their cemetery sites – with Fallings Heath on Beebee Road in Wednesbury already decided.

It comes as the project has received the full backing of Wednesbury North councillor Peter Hughes who said the council hopes to address the situation.

Councillor Hughes said: "I have had a chat with council officers and my understanding is that he is still waiting for financial information relating to the other cemeteries. He has the cost for Fallings Heath cemetery but is still waiting for the others."

"He will know for definite by the first or second week in February obviously if it is possible to go ahead."

"I think at the end of the day in the case of the particular incident at Fallings Heath the perpetrator was found and the police dealt with him."

"At the end of the day CCTV in most instances is a deterrent and I think they recognise that the idea of giving reassurance is a good one."

"It is an idea I would support, I fully support it. Either way the council are trying to address the situation."

Knockout clash to be screened

A WORLD title boxing clash is to be presented live on the big screen at Vue Cinemas in Star City, Birmingham.

The all-British fight between the WBA super-middleweight world champion George Groves and IBO champion Chris Eubank Junior will be streamed in high-definition live from Manchester Arena on February 17.

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Killer jailed for 21 years after bungled burglary

A 19-year-old who murdered a father-of-two during a bungled burglary has started at least 21 years behind bars.

Damilola Johnson and a 15-year-old, now aged 17, but who cannot be named, broke into the home of Simon Johnson to steal cannabis from the crop being grown at the house in Netherton.

They were both armed with knives picked up from the kitchen after entering the house in Cradley Road, which they knew was occupied, during the early hours of August 11 2016, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

They had filled several bin bags with leaves cut from the plants but were greedy for more and when searching for more items to steal went into the bedroom where Mr Johnson – no relation – was sleeping.

Woke

Damilola Johnson accidentally kicked the bed and woke 41-year-old Mr Johnson, who lived alone after an amicable split from his wife and children the previous summer.

There was a struggle during which the householder was knifed at least four times by Damilola Johnson with the most serious injuries being to his back and under an arm.

The attackers fled with some of the haul, leaving Mr Johnson to die on the upstairs landing where his body was later found. The pair later discarded their knives and stolen credit cards.

Johnson, of no fixed address, was told he must serve at least 21 years of a life sentence in custody before being considered for parole. He was con-



Damilola Johnson – killer showed no remorse and is jailed for 21 years

victed of murder and burglary after a trial. The other defendant, who was found guilty of manslaughter by the jury, had admitted burglary and theft. He was given an extended sentence of ten years detention. He must serve at least two thirds of the term and can only be freed when it is considered safe to do so. He will then be monitored for three years longer than usual.

The burglars had heard about the cannabis plants from friends who had been drinking in Mr Johnson's home.

The victim was said to have a friendly, trusting nature and had been warned by pals about inviting people



Simon Johnson – victim was knifed at least four times at his Netherton home

he met at the pub back to his home. Judge James Burbidge QC told them: "The psychological trauma suffered by the two young daughters of Mr Johnson is almost beyond comprehension."

Mr Johnson's widow Roz – the couple have daughters now aged 18 and 11 with – remained close to him despite living apart. She said: "They adored him."

Detective Inspector Warren Hines said: "He was brutally attacked in his own home by greedy, violent criminals and not one shred of remorse has been shown by either of the convicted youths."

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Join debate on Powell's Rivers of Blood speech

FOR 50 years Enoch Powell's Rivers of Blood speech has continued to divide opinion and spark heated debate.

It is clearly still of interest today ahead of a discussion on the former Wolverhampton MP's legacy.

Organised by our sister paper the Express & Star, it has already received a host of questions to be put to the six-strong panel at the debate, part of the Wolverhampton Literature Festival which runs from January 26 to 28.

The panel consists of academics, politicians and authors, all of whom have a personal interest in Powell and the impact his words have had on modern day Britain. Readers have put forward such interesting questions as 'If the speech was made today would/should the speaker be prosecuted?'

Anxieties

And 'Can the panelists identify one positive change in local or national life that came about because of the speech?'

On the panel is Wolverhampton South West MP Eleanor Smith, who said after she won Powell's old seat at last year's general election: "I feel it closes that chapter now for good."

Historian Dr Shirin Hirsch is also taking part. The University of Wolverhampton research fellow is writing a book on Powell, and says that his speech created 'a political language to direct people's anxieties towards black immigrants'.

The panel also features UKIP MEP Bill Etheridge - who echoed Powell's words in a controversial speech of his own in November 2015 - and journalist and political commentator Nick Jones, who has written extensively about his father and former Express



Enoch Powell's speech has continued to divide opinion



Eleanor Smith is the Labour MP for Enoch Powell's old seat

& Star editor Clem Jones' relationship with Powell.

Wolverhampton-born political activist Patrick Vernon and Express & Star columnist Nigel Hastilow make up the sextet.

Anyone who would like to submit a question can email karen.baker@expressandstar.co.uk, or write to Editor's Secretary Karen Baker, Express & Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES. Readers are welcome to come along and put question themselves. The debate is at the university MC001 building at 2.30pm on January 27 and is free.

Powell delivered his speech on April 20, 1968, at the Midland Hotel in Birmingham. In it, the then Conservative MP warned against mass immigration and alluded to ancient Roman literature when he warned the streets of Britain would be awash with blood

as a result of racial conflict. It would become the defining moment of his lengthy political career.

Meanwhile, the winners have now been chosen for both the Express & Star short story competition and the young authors contest. The winners will be unveiled on January 27.

The winner will be read out at the festival by local author Paul Dowswell at Wolverhampton Art Gallery after his talk with fellow writer Ian Billings entitled Writing for Fun and Profit on January 28, 12.30-1.30pm. The story will be printed in the Express & Star.

The four winning stories from the young author competition, open to Key Stage 2 and 3 children, will be performed by performing arts students at Wolverhampton College at the Slade Rooms from 2pm. The Festival will see more than 80 events taking place at venues across the city.



Lizzy Watts plays the title role of the free-spirited Hedda Gabler, one of the great dramatic roles in theatre

National Theatre tour brings Hedda to Grand

THE National Theatre's production of classic marital strife drama Hedda Gabler is being staged at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre.

This modern version of Henrik Ibsen's classic 1891 play has been adapted by Olivier Award-winning playwright Patrick Marber to give a contemporary resonance to the story of a young bride trapped in a loveless marriage, which drives her to extremes. This critically acclaimed production is now on a UK and Ireland

tour following a sold out run at the National Theatre.

It is being staged at the Grand from Tuesday to Saturday, January 27.

Lizzy Watts plays the title role of the free-spirited Hedda Gabler, one of the greatest dramatic parts in theatre and regarded as the female Hamlet.

Miss Watts' theatre credits include Strife at Chichester Festival Theatre, A Midsummer Night's Dream at The Globe, Blink for Nabokov and Wasted for Paines Plough. Her TV work in-

cludes The Durrells, in which she played Larry's girlfriend Nancy, and Midsommer Murders. She also plays Ivy Layton in BBC Radio 4's Home Front.

It is directed by Olivier and Tony Award-winner Ivo van Hove, who also directed acclaimed productions of A View from the Bridge and Network.

There is an opening night two for one ticket offer and for further details see grandtheatre.co.uk or call the box office on 01902 429212.

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Geoff: I owe my life to university medics

EX-ENGLAND and Wolves footballer Geoff Thomas has paid tribute to life-saving medics as he collected an honorary doctorate from Birmingham City University.

The ex-footballer, leukaemia survivor and charity fundraiser told students and academics that he wouldn't have been here without the work of Birmingham's Professor Charlie Craddock and his team.

The presentation was made during a ceremony held at Birmingham's Symphony Hall, alongside students graduating from the University's Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences.

Wonderful

Geoff was selected to receive the award in recognition of the millions of pounds he has helped raise for blood cancer charities since recovering from the disease himself – despite being told he had just three months to live in 2003.

Speaking at the ceremony Geoff said: "I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for a certain Professor Charlie Craddock and his wonderful team. He guided me through a year of treatment, radiotherapy, chemotherapy and through the arduous stem cell transplant which saved my life."

He added: "This new funding is delivering new hope to patients being diagnosed today. Birmingham is a hub and Charlie Craddock and his team are a leading light in this fight. I was very fortunate because of where I lived, that I got the best care."

"I've come back to Cure Leukaemia and we've raised £1.5 million this year to help extend the Haematology Cen-



Geoff Thomas, with Sir Lenny Henry and Professors Graham Henderson and Phillip Plowden of Birmingham City University

tre to make it a state-of-the-art facility. It actually opens today and I'm so proud of that." Over a 20-year professional career, Geoff played for football clubs including Crystal Palace, Nottingham Forest and Wolves, as well as picking up nine caps for England.

After retiring from the game in 2002 he was diagnosed with a form of leukaemia and given just three months to live, but following a stem cell transplant from his sister and treatment by Birmingham's Professor Charlie Craddock he entered remission two years later. Geoff has dedicated his life to raising funds for blood cancer patients since recovering from leukaemia, starting the Geoff Thomas Foundation, which raises funds to fight

cancer, and regularly taking part in activities for Cure Leukaemia.

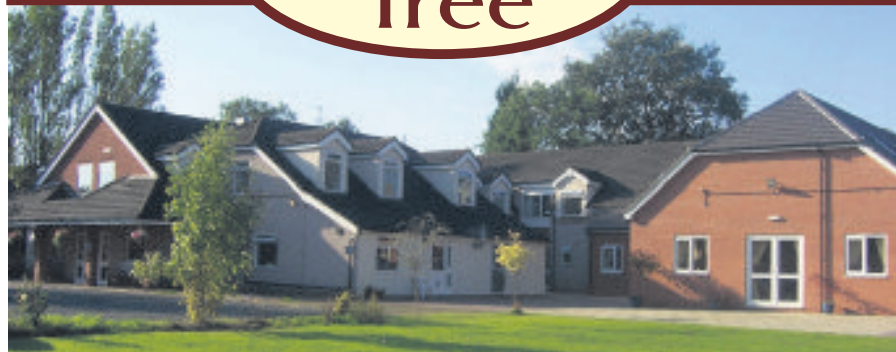
He has had a long association with the West Midlands having arrived in the region in 1993 to pull on the old gold of Wolves where he spent four seasons.

He has also been a supporter of ex-Aston Villa captain Sullivan Petrov who retired from the game after being diagnosed with leukaemia in 2013, and Wolves goalkeeper Carl Ikeme, who is currently undergoing treatment for leukaemia. Closing his speech Geoff said: "Finally, all I'd say to you graduates from what I've learned through the world of sport and what I've been through, if you believe and you have the passion just go for it."

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Make smart choice of holiday and save money

DESPERATE to get a trip in the diary? Read these tips before handing over your cash, says Vicky Shaw.

With 2018 signalling a fresh start, many of will be thinking about planning our getaways, to bring a ray of sunshine to the gloom of the winter months.

But while you may be dreaming of an exciting escape, when making your plans, make sure you don't fall foul of a holiday pitfall that could leave a serious dent in your pocket.

Here are 6 holiday pitfalls to avoid, which could stop you spending more than you need to...

1. Don't rule out destinations where your money may go further

Travel money expert FairFX says currency shouldn't be an afterthought – choosing a destination with a better exchange rate could spell savings when it comes to forking out for accommodation, shopping and dining out.

FairFX suggests looking at where the pound has performed well over the long-run to find destinations where your travel budget could go further. It says sterling has fared particularly well against currencies in Argentina, Nicaragua and Costa Rica over the past year, for example. Destinations such as Sri Lanka, Laos, Indonesia and Hong Kong are also generally offering UK travellers better value compared with a year ago.

Ian Strafford-Taylor, chief executive of FairFX, says: "If the Brexit trade talks have some positive momentum in 2018, then we may see sterling improve against the euro. However, if Brexit negotiations impact on sterling creating another rocky year, travellers may have to look further afield."

2. Don't forget to plan how you buy your currency

"Regardless of your holiday destination, there's plenty of steps to follow to make sure that when you want to buy currency, you get the very biggest bang for your buck," Ian adds. "This includes considering exchange rates before you book, tracking rates so you buy when they're at their strongest, as well as avoiding travel money traps, such as buying currency at the airports and being hit with credit and debit card fees."

3. Don't be rushed into booking a deal without checking out whether it really is a 'bargain'

Some holiday ads may boast special 'limited-time offers', which could encourage you to snap up what they are offering without checking whether you could be getting a better deal. But consumer group Which? says that while tight deadlines, emotive language and count-downs may rush us into making a decision, it might not turn out to be the right one.

Rory Boland, Which? travel editor, says: "Compare prices with other holiday companies and travel agents to check savings are genuine."

4. Don't risk it by travelling without insurance

Travelling abroad uninsured can cost thousands if a trip goes wrong.

According to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), nearly three-quarters (72%) of people aged over-55 plan to travel abroad in 2018 and half (50%) of these have a pre-existing medical condition.

A European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) provides access to state medical care in the European Economic Area - but does not cover other costs, such as bringing the patient back to the UK, or additional accommodation costs in-country. The FCO says holidaymakers should research the appropriate travel insurance options and make sure they give a detailed and accurate medical history to insurers.

5. And don't just assume you're covered

Just because you have some form of insurance, don't just assume it will cover your particular trip without checking. Research from financial information business Defaqto shows that the level of protection for cruise holidays, for example, varies considerably. Only 58% out of single trip policies, and 61% of annual policies it researched cover cruise holidays as standard.

6. Finally, don't forget to pack your insurer's contact details

When you go away, make sure you take note of your insurer's emergency phone number. That way, if something happens, you can call your insurer first for help.



Model wearing Zakti Men's Uninterrupted Seamless Base Layer Top Dark Grey, £14.99 (was £29.99) and Seamless Pants, £14.99 (were £29.99), available from Zakti Active



Model wearing Sweaty Betty Vienoisserie Seamless Long Sleeve Base Layer, £65, and Seamless Ski Leggings, £65, avail-

Choosing the right gear when you hit the slopes

By Katie Wright

HITTING the slopes for the first time this year? Here's how to assemble your gear.

You've chosen a trendy resort that guarantees days of pristine snow and nights of apres-ski fun, gathered your gang, found a stunning chalet and the flights are booked.

The scene is set for an awesome first skiing trip – but now the prospect of packing appears and one question remains: what do you actually wear?

When it comes to outdoor activities in sub-zero temperatures, getting the kit right is more than just a matter of looking good (although, there's that too, of course), which is why we've enlisted the help of a skiwear expert to explain the key components of a slope-ready wardrobe.

Whether you're whooshing down red runs in Whistler, or going off-piste in Alpbach, these are the five essential items to consider when shopping for skiwear...

1. Base layers

The innermost garment in your ski outfit (apart from underwear, obviously) should be a lightweight base layer top and leggings.

"Base layers are supposed to act like a second skin, so the most important factor to consider is that they are comfortable," explains Avril Moran, head of buying at Mountain Warehouse.

"Choose a fabric which is going to give you an extra layer of insulation and keep you warm, but also ideally one which has sweat-wicking properties. Even though you're out in the snow all day you can still work up a sweat, so a fabric which keeps you dry by wicking the sweat away from your body is key."

Sweaty Betty Vienoisserie Seamless Long Sleeve Base Layer and Seamless Ski Leggings, £65 each

Men's Uninterrupted Seamless Base Layer Top in Dark Grey and Seamless Pants, both currently reduced to £14.99 from £29.99, Zaktiactive.com

2. Mid layers

Next comes a mid layer, which should be looser than a base layer, to allow for movement, and thicker to provide extra insulation under your ski jacket.

Zip-up fleeces and hoodies work well for this layer, and snug high collars help to keep the cold out.

Roxy Harmony Full Zip Fleece in Blue, £55, ASOS

Men's Positive Charge Blue Midlayer, currently reduced to £14.99 from £25), and Power Knee Length Shorts, currently reduced to £14.99 from £18, Zaktiactive.com

3. Ski jackets

Ski jackets come in many different styles, but for novice skiers, Avril recommends three key features to look out for when



She wears Zakti Women's Beat the Blizzard Coral Jacket, £49.99 (was £79.99); Women's Beat the Blizzard Ski Pants, £34.99 (were £59.99). He wearw Zakti Men's Aerial Printed Ski Jacket, £39.99 (was £79.99); Black Alpine Ski Pants, £29.99 (was £59.99); shoes and accessories, stylist's own), all available from Zakti Active

shopping for yours.

"The first is, make sure your jacket is snowproof to keep you protected, the second is that it is has a light padding for insulation, and the third that it comes with a snowskirt, to help prevent snow getting into your ski pants!" she explains.

"I also recommend you make sure the jacket you choose isn't restrictive, that it fits comfortably under the arms and allows you to bend. It's surprising how much you actually move when skiing."

Mountain Warehouse's Ski Outfit Packages include a jacket, pants, hat, gloves and socks, currently reduced to from £64.99 (usually £148.95) for kids and from £89.99 (usually £190.95) for adults

Helly Hansen Women's Hooded Jacket in Purple, £220, ASOS

4. Ski pants

"Similar to the ski jackets, it's important as a first-time skier or snowboarder that your ski pants are comfortable and not restrictive, to make sure you are able to bend with ease," says Avril.

"Make sure they are also snowproof, are insulated to keep you warm, and have integrated snow gaiters to keep you comfortable and protected from getting snow inside your pant leg or in to your ski boot."

Women's Beat the Blizzard Coral Jacket, currently reduced to £49.99 from £79.99, and Ski Pants, currently reduced to £34.99 from £59.99; Men's Aerial Printed Ski Jacket, currently reduced to £39.99 from £79.99, and Black Alpine Ski Pants, currently reduced to £29.99 from £59.99, Zaktiactive.com (shoes and accessories, stylist's own)

Roxy Women's Creek Pants in Blue, £155, ASOS

5. Accessories

"Accessories are just as important as the rest of your ski kit and should not be considered an afterthought," Avril warns. "When it comes to hats, something made from an insulating fabric is important. Even though everyone wears a helmet on the slopes your head can still get cold, so a hat is just as important to wear underneath your helmet.

"When choosing a pair of gloves, it is also important to make sure they are made of an insulating fabric and that they have good grip, because you need to hold on to those poles pretty tight!"

"Ski socks are a staple for any skier/snowboarder, as you're on your feet most of the day," Avril adds. "I recommend a soft, insulating fabric with flat toe seams, to avoid rubbing when you're out on the slopes."

"When it comes to eye protection, I recommend you go for goggles over glasses. Eyes can become very tired and dry in the wind and cold – goggles will offer the warmth and protection that sunglasses won't. It's very important to make sure your goggles have certified UV protection as it can be very sunny at the top of the slopes, resulting in glare from the snow."

Roxly Women's Rockferry Printed Ski Goggles, £95, ASOS

Superdry Men's Glacier Snow Goggles, £44.99

Superdry SD Merino Snow Socks Double Pack Dark Grey, £24.99

Fun, friendship and laughter on the move

Greenline Coaches pride themselves on being the Black Country's true king of the road. Based in Stourbridge, the thriving family-owned company aims to put the customer first at all times by offering executive coach hire combined with a diverse range of day tours, weekend breaks and two and five to eight-day holidays throughout the UK. Many of the hotels used by Greenline are also family-owned and run. Greenline director/owner Andy Phillips is assisted by wife Nikki, brother Simon, niece Amy, and 10 other trusted members of staff to complete a happy and efficient team.

Experience

Andy has many years' experience within the sector having previously worked for a well-known Blackheath coach company until their retirement. Andy said: "After that company ended, I used to see lots of old customers and they'd always comment on how much they missed their day trips and holidays so that inspired me to start our own company. "I'm delighted to say we get lots of word-of-mouth recommendations and repeat bookings. Our personal and friendly service combined with our experienced office staff, professional drivers and couriers ensure that our customers' day tours and holidays are always pleasurable and memorable. "We treat our customers as a name, not a number, and regard them as part of our Greenline family. They receive free drinks, biscuits and treats on all holidays served by our friendly and helpful on-board couriers." Greenline's smart coaches are modern 16 to 53-seater executive models with air



The thriving family-owned company puts the customer first at all times

suspension, toilets, air conditioning and drink-making facilities. Holidays are being offered throughout the year including tours to Torquay, Weymouth and Sidmouth, Scotland and Blackpool. The company has invested over £500,000 in its fleet recently and took delivery

of a 53-seater luxury Scania coach in April last year with two other new vehicles arriving in 2018 to meet demands for great Greenline Holidays and day tours. Andy added: "Everyone at Greenline Coaches has a big heart coupled with a huge passion

to succeed in what we enjoy doing most in life, which is providing fun, friendship and laughter in the holidays and day trips we provide for our customers. We would like to thank all of our customers for supporting us on our journey over the past eight years and look forward

to welcoming them, with new customers, on board in the future." For the full 2018 programme of day tours and holidays and details of how to book call 01384 444464 or 01384 444161 or visit www.greenlinecoaches.com



BABBACOMBE - HOTEL DE LA MER Winter Warmer Monday 29th Jan - Friday 2nd Feb 2018 5 Days	\$169	CROMER - HOTEL DE PARIS NEW Sunday 13th - Saturday 19th May 2018 7 Days	\$365	ISLE OF WIGHT - BAYSHORE HOTEL, SANDOWN NEW Saturday 28th July - Saturday 4th August 2018 8 Days	\$439	GREENLINE BASH! - 5 DAY MYSTERY NEW Monday 22nd - Friday 26th October 2018 5 Days	\$209
MYSTERY?? - FREE BAR, POOL & LEISURE FACILITIES Monday 5th - Friday 9th Feb 2018 5 Days	\$199	MORECAMBE LAKES & DALES - AUCKLAND HOTEL Monday 14th - Friday 18th May 2018 5 Days	\$259	WARNER LAKESIDE COASTAL VILLAGE NEW Monday 6th - Friday 10th August 2018 5 Days	\$309	BLACKPOOL ILLUMINATIONS - CARN-BRAE HOTEL Saturday 12th - Monday 29th October 2018 3 Days	\$149
WESTON SUPER MARE - SANDRINGHAM HOTEL \$2 Bar All Week Monday 12th - Friday 16th Feb 2018 5 Days	\$175	MYSTERY SOUTH COAST - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Friday 18th - Monday 21st May 2018 4 Days	\$159	MYSTERY WEEKEND - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Saturday 11th - Sunday 12th August 2018 2 Days	\$79	LONDON - 5 STAR WALDORF HOTEL***** Treat Yourself! Sunday 28th - Monday 29 October 2018 2 Days	\$119
TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL Monday 19th - Friday 23rd Feb 2018 Winter Warmer 5 Days	\$159	EASTBOURNE - THE HADLEIGH HOTEL Monday 21st - Friday 25th May 2018 5 Days	\$289	PAIGNTON - HOTEL BONAIR ESPLANADE Saturday 11th - Saturday 18th August 2018 8 Days	\$379	PAIGNTON - HOTEL BONAIR ESPLANADE Turkey & Tinsel Monday 29th Oct - Friday 2nd Nov 2018 5 Days	\$239
CABARET MYSTERY 4 DAY TOUR? - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Friday 23rd - Monday 26th Feb 2018 4 Days	\$119	MYSTERY WEEKEND - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Saturday 26th - Sunday 27th May 2018 2 Days	\$79	ST IVES - COTTAGE HOTEL Sunday 19th - Saturday 25th August 2018 7 Days	\$379	TORQUAY - HOWDEN COURT HOTEL Turkey & Tinsel With a Halloween Twist Monday 29th Oct - Friday 2nd Nov 2018 5 Days	\$269
LLANDUDNO - ST KILDA HOTEL *** We'll Meet Again Monday 26th Feb - Friday 2nd March 2018 Theme 5 Days	\$235	LONDON - 5 STAR WALDORF HOTEL ***** Treat Yourself! Sunday 27th - Monday 28th May 2018 2 Days	\$119	TENBY - CLARENCE HOUSE HOTEL Sunday 26th - Thursday 30th August 2018 5 Days	\$309	TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL Turkey & Tinsel Friday 2nd - Sunday 4th Nov 2018 3 Days	\$119
MYSTERY 4 DAY TOUR? - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Friday 2nd - Monday 5th March 2018 4 Days	\$139	TORQUAY - HOWDEN COURT HOTEL Monday 28th May - Friday 1st June 2018 5 Days	\$259	SETTLE TO CARLISLE RAILWAY - AUCKLAND HOTEL Friday 31st August - Sunday 2nd Sept 2018 3 Days	\$149	EASTBOURNE - HADDON HALL HOTEL Turkey & Tinsel Monday 5th - Friday 9th Nov 2018 5 Days	\$290
EASTBOURNE - HADDON HALL Monday 5th - Friday 9th March 2018 5 Days	\$235	SETTLE TO CARLISLE RAILWAY - AUCKLAND HOTEL Friday 1st - Sunday 3rd June 2018 3 Days	\$149	MYSTERY WEEKEND - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Saturday 1st - Sunday 2nd Sept 2018 2 Days	\$79	WESTON-SUPER-MARE - SANDRINGHAM HOTEL Monday 5th - Friday 9th Nov 2018 5 Days	\$249
CABARET MYSTERY 4 DAY TOUR? - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Friday 16th - Monday 19th March 2018 4 Days	\$139	PAIGNTON - HOTEL BONAIR ESPLANADE Saturday 2nd - Saturday 9th June 2018 8 Days	\$365	LLANDUDNO - THE MARLBOROUGH HOTEL Monday 3rd - Friday 7th Sept 2018 5 Days	\$299	MYSTERY WEEKEND - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Turkey & Tinsel Saturday 10th - Sunday 11th Nov 2018 2 Days	\$79
EXMOUTH - CAVENDISH HOTEL Monday 19th - Friday 23rd March 2018 5 Days	\$225	PORTHCAWL - SEABANK HOTEL Wednesday 6th - Sunday 10th June 2018 5 Days	\$275	EASTBOURNE - LANGHAM HOTEL Monday 3rd - Friday 7th Sept 2018 5 Days	\$309	LLANDUDNO - QUEENS HOTEL Turkey & Tinsel Monday 12th - Friday 16th Nov 2018 5 Days	\$275
TORQUAY NETHWAY HOTEL Monday 19th - Friday 23rd March 2018 5 days	\$199	NEWQUAY - ELIOT HOTEL Sunday 10th - Saturday 16th June 2018 7 Days	\$359	BABBACOMBE - HOTEL DE LA MER Saturday 8TH - Wednesday 12th Sept 2018 5 Days	\$279	BABBACOMBE - HOTEL DE LA MER Turkey & Tinsel Tuesday 13th - Saturday 17th Nov 2018 5 Days	\$259
CABARET MYSTERY 4 DAY TOUR? - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Friday 23rd - Monday 26th March 2018 4 Days	\$139	LYTHAM ST ANNES - LINDUN HOTEL Monday 11th - Friday 15th June 2018 5 Days	\$265	SCARBOROUGH - RED LEA HOTEL Monday 10 - Friday 14th Sept 2018 5 Days	\$299	MYSTERY TURKEY & TINSEL - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Turkey & Tinsel Friday 16th - Monday 19th Nov 2018 4 Days	\$159
BOGNOR REGIS - ROYAL NORFOLK HOTEL Monday 26 - Friday 30th March 2018 5 Days	\$225	MYSTERY WEEKEND - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Saturday 16th - Sunday 17th June 2018 2 Days	\$79	HAYLING ISLAND - MILL RYTHE HOLIDAY VILLAGE Monday 10th - Friday 14th Sept 2018 5 Days	\$239	TENBY - CLARENCE HOUSE HOTEL Turkey & Tinsel Monday 19th - Friday 23rd Nov 2018 5 Days	\$279
PORTCAWL - SEABANK HOTEL Easter Friday 30th March - Monday 2nd April 2018 4 Days	\$209	SIDMOUTH - THE BEDFORD HOTEL Monday 18th - Friday 22nd June 2018 5 Days	\$349	WEYMOUTH - FAIRHAVEN HOTEL Monday 17th - Friday 21st Sept 2018 5 Days	\$309	SIDMOUTH - ROYAL YORKS & FAULKNER HOTEL Turkey & Tinsel Wednesday 21st - Sunday 25th Nov 2018 5 Days	\$299
SIDMOUTH - ROYAL YORK & FAULKNER HOTEL Easter week Monday 2nd - Friday 6th April 2018 5 Days	\$329	ISLE OF WIGHT - THE TROUVILLE HOTEL, SANDOWN Monday 18th - Saturday 23rd June 2018 6 Days	\$359	LYTHAM ST ANNES - LINDUN HOTEL Monday 17th - Friday 21st Sept 2018 5 Days	\$279	PORTHCAWL - SEABANK HOTEL Turkey & Tinsel Monday 26th - Friday 30th Nov 2018 5 Days	\$239
SPRING WEEKEND MYSTERY - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Friday 6th - Monday 9th April 2018 4 Days	\$149	TORQUAT - NETHWAY HOTEL Motown Weekend Friday 22nd - Sunday 24 June 2018 3 Days	\$119	MYSTERY WEEKEND - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Friday 21st - Monday 24th Sept 2018 4 Days	\$199	GREAT YARMOUTH - NEW BEACH HOTEL Thurstford Spectacular Friday 30th November - Monday 3rd Dec 2018 4 Days	\$259
WEYMOUTH - FAIRHAVEN HOTEL Monday 9th - Friday 13th April 2018 5 Days	\$269	BABBACOMBE - HOTEL DE LA MER Sunday 23th - Wednesday 27th June 2018 5 Days	\$269	TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL Monday 24th - Friday 28th Sept 2018 5 Days	\$245	CROMER - HOTEL DE PARIS Thurstford Spectacular Friday 7th - Monday 10th Dec 2018 4 Days	\$259
ILFRACOMBE - IMPERIAL HOTEL Monday 16th - Friday 20th April 2018 5 Days	\$219	EASTBOURNE - HADDON HALL Saturday 30th June - Saturday 7th July 2018 8 Days	\$439	MORECAMBE - CARLISLE/SETTLE RAILWAY & SCOTISH BORDERS AUCKLAND HOTEL Monday 24th - Friday 28th Sept 2018 5 Days	\$289	LONDON - 5 STAR WALDORF HOTEL ***** Christmas Shopping Sunday 16th - Monday 17th Dec 2018 2 Days	\$119
WARNERS CORTON COASTAL VILLAGE Monday 16th - Friday 20th April 2018 5 Days	\$279	SCARBOROUGH - CUMBERLAND HOTEL NEW Wednesday 4th - Sunday 8th July 2018 5 Days	\$275	CRICCIETH - GEORGE IV HOTEL Monday 1st - Friday 5th October 2018 5 Days	\$219	PAIGNTON - HOTEL BONAIR ESPLANADE Christmas Sunday 23rd - Thursday 27th Dec 2018 5 Days	\$420
WEEKEND MYSTERY - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Saturday 21st - Sunday 22nd April 2018 2 Days	\$79	WARNERS ALVASTON HALL HOTEL NEW Monday 9th - Friday 13th July 2018 5 Days	\$375	MYSTERY WEEKEND - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Saturday 6th - Sunday 7th October 2018 2 days	\$79	TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL Christmas Sunday 23rd - Thursday 27th Dec 2018 5 Days	\$429
TENBY - CLARENCE HOUSE HOTEL Monday 23rd - Friday 27th April 2017 5 Days	\$269	WEYMOUTH - FAIRHAVEN HOTEL Monday 9th - Friday 13th July 2018 5 Days	\$309	SCOTLAND DUNOON - SELBOURNE HOTEL NEW Sunday 7th - Saturday 13th October 2018 7 Days	\$279	BABBACOMBE - HOTEL DE LA MER Twixmas Thursday 27th - Sunday 30th Dec 2018 4 Days	\$179
TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL Motown Weekend Friday 27th - Sunday 29th April 2018 3 Days	\$119	TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL Motown Weekend Friday 13th - Sunday 15th July 2018 3 Days	\$119	WEYMOUTH - NORFOLK HOTEL NEW Friday 12th - Monday 15th October 2018 4 Days	\$139	TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL Twixmas Thursday 27th - Sunday 30th Dec 2018 4 Days	\$179
PAIGNTON - HOTEL BONAIR ESPLANADE Monday 30th April - Friday 4th May 2018 5 Days	\$235	KEGNESS - SAVOY HOTEL Monday 16th - Friday 20th July 2018 5 Days	\$299	BLACKPOOL ILLUMINATIONS - CARN-BRAE HOTEL Monday 15th - Friday 19th October 2018 5 Days	\$229	TENBY - CLARENCE HOUSE HOTEL New Year Sun 30th Dec 2018 - Wed 2nd Jan 2019 4 Days	\$349
BABBACOMBE - HOTEL DE LA MER Friday 4th - Sunday 6th May 2018 3 Days	\$125	TORQUAY - HOWDEN COURT HOTEL Saturday 21st - Saturday 28th July 2018 8 Days	\$399	WARNERS - CRICKET ST THOMAS HOTEL NEW Monday 15th - Friday 19th October 2018 5 Days	\$359	ILFRACOMBE - IMPERIAL HOTEL New Year Sun 30th Dec 2018 - Wed 2nd Jan 2019 4 Days	\$365
LLANDUDNO - QUEENS HOTEL Monday 7th - Friday 11th May 2018 5 Days	\$309	BOURNEMOUTH - ULLSWATER HOTEL Monday 23rd - Friday 27th July 2018 5 Days	\$265	TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL Motown Weekend Friday 19th - Sunday 21st October 2018 3 Days	\$119	LLANDUDNO - ST KILDA HOTEL *** New Year Sun 30th Dec 2018 - Wed 2nd Jan 2019 4 Days	\$379
GREAT YARMOUTH - NEW BEACH HOTEL Wednesday 9th - Sunday 13th May 2018 5 Days	\$235						

Changing styles for a changing market

ANTIQUES AND COLLECTIBLES

with John Ridgway of Perry & Phillips



I THOUGHT we would start the new year with a series of columns on items likely to prove favourites in 2018.

As ever with the antiques trade we've seen the wane in popularity of various vintage items over the past 12 months, it's a fickle business and there is literally no accounting for taste!

It's most odd but people seem to change their opinions on what they want in vintage terms at the same time – the shift in demand tends not to happen gradually but all at once.

So our first saleroom star for the coming year is Old Country Roses china, pretty and elegant and sold to eager buyers in huge quantities.

The china, made by Royal Albert, was first produced in 1962 and its pattern was based on that of a predecessor, King's Ransom.

The designer was Harold Holdcroft who wanted to replicate within his design the essence of the traditional English garden – and he did it in style.

And people all over the world were – and still are, it seems – very keen to replicate English tea time with very English tea-sets.

Royal Albert traces its history right back to 1896 but it wasn't until 1904, after the company had produced commemorative pieces for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and the acquisition of a Royal Warrant that it added the 'Royal' to its name.

There is without doubt something special about drinking tea from china cups and apparently the tea stays warmer longer when served in china.



So the appeal of Old Country Roses pieces can be practical as well as a desire to display very pretty china trios.

It seems too that we are no longer worried about buying vintage china because it might get damaged in a dishwasher – we have remembered

that we can wash things by hand!

So Old Country Roses china is right up there on the sale-goer's wish-list, which is good news if you have some to sell.

Check carefully for any signs of damage before taking pieces of this lovely china in for valuation, it may have been used regularly over the years and so may have sustained a few cracks and chips.

And the same goes if you are buying, make sure items are in pristine condition during pre-sale viewing.

Whether you're buying or selling we look forward to seeing you at the Perry and Phillips saleroom during 2018!

- Perry and Phillips hold valuation days, for sale items only, every Wednesday from 10am until 4pm.
- The next Perry and Phillips sale of antiques and collectables takes place at the Mill Street saleroom on Tuesday, February 6. Viewing will be during the weekend and on Monday and also from 10am on auction day
- New sale bidders are advised to attends the saleroom early on auction day to register and be allocated a bidding number.
- Perry and Phillips hold sales on the first Tuesday of every other month.

New trends mean huge array of drinks on offer



Prosecco is increasingly popular

CELEBRATIONS for Christmas and new year are finished. Decorations are packed away for another year, photos downloaded from the camera and the turkey has been eaten, at last.

I now have to find a space in the cupboard for the bottles of drink, a selection purchased so guests can have a glass of their favourite tippie when they visit, many still unopened.

The trend in drinks is amazing, so much choice all with a description of their unusual flavours, colours and perfumes, elaborate bottle shapes and arty labels to help persuade you to buy.

The mixers are also important to complement the subtle fruit flavours.

Ciders are produced in various guises, promoted as the newest cooling summer beverage and there is an artform to the presentation in the correct glass, type of ice and garnish.

It is only in recent years that the drinks companies have marketed their wares in a new and exciting way.

We now all know more about wine and our personal favourites. The brewers spending extensive marketing budgets on advertising and

STYLE FOCUS

with Janet Timmis



the pubs offering huge selections of alcoholic choice.

Micro-breweries and cocktail bars more successful than ever. It seems we no longer have a favourite quaff, most of us happy to try the newest offering.

The Red Lion in Market Drayton, for example, offers a vast selection of gins, celebrating this popular spirit with an August Gin Tea Party and presented in a china teacup and saucer and decorated with edible flowers.

There is strawberry, raspberry and rhubarb flavours and many, many more to tempt us. Their choice of whiskeys is just as extensive.

Joules and Titanic local breweries delight so many with traditional and new exciting flavours of beer and the Brunning and Price group offer a delightful choice of non-alcoholic gins in their pubs. No longer do we order just a pint of bitter or lager or a simple vodka

and orange, gin and tonic or cider, most of us have favourite cocktails and have a glass of port with our cheese board. The display of bottles in our local hostelrys is creative and artistic. Present day bar staff need more than a little training.

The supermarket isles expand and the shelves groan under the weight.

Tinned premixed spirits, pouches of alcoholic and non-alcoholic cocktails and cartons of various liquors. Wine from all over the world and displayed by strength, flavour, type, price.

The popularity of Prosecco and other sparkling wines and champagnes gives rise to their own section on the shelves.

It is not just alcoholic drinks that have been revived and regenerated lately. Fresh fruit juices, cloudy lemonade, elderflower pressé, smoothies, frapps and flavoured water benefit from the trend. The choice is quite daunting.

Try a few but please drink responsibly.

www.jflexclusive.com

www.jfgarmentsolutions.co.uk

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A hairdresser applying colour to a customer's hair at a salon



Going from blonde to brunette can be more complicated

Try before you dye, if you want to change hair colour



It is relatively easy to darken red hair

WHETHER you want to go darker or are reaching for the bleach, here's what you need to know before you take the plunge.

New year, new... hair? If the dawn of 2018 has got you itching to switch up the shade of your tresses, we say go for it – but don't rush in without carefully considering your options.

"Any change in hair colour should have a thorough consultation with a professional, so we can manage your expectations and let you know what we think is achievable," says Jack Howard, expert colourist at Paul Edmonds Salon London for L'Oreal Professionnel. "Many people don't realise that getting to your perfect colour is a journey and cannot be achieved in one hair appointment – and definitely not in one at home box colour."

What would happen if you did decide to grab the first dye kit that takes your fancy and whack it on your barnet? "Well, best of luck, but be aware of mismatched roots, patchy colour, breakage, bad results... the list could go on!" Jack warns. "There are so many things that can go wrong with at-home hair colouring."

The colourist is keen to help avoid dye-job disasters, so here, he sets out the three things you should always take into account when choosing a new hue, and how a professional can get you there, no matter what your base colour is.

By Katie Wright

Try before you dye: three factors to think about...

1. Your hair condition

"Condition is key," Jack says. "Although we have amazing colours and hair-strengthening bonding products – which can be added during the colouring process – if the hair is not great, we need to start working on the health before we start a colour-change journey. Nothing looks worse than unhealthy, damaged, broken hair."

2. Colour upkeep

"Whenever considering a colour change, I like to advise clients of ongoing cost, upkeep and time commitment, so there's a general overview of what it means to change your colour and keep your desired new shade," Jack explains. Going back to get your roots done every six weeks isn't cheap, so make sure you know what the upkeep will cost.

3. Your hair and skin colour

This is one area where Jack isn't so prescriptive: "There was a time when skin colour always came into the equation, but when people are looking at extreme changes, quite often it becomes statement hair and that doesn't follow the same rules!"

How's it done in the salon? What to expect if your natural hair colour is...

Black

"If your hair is black, you will need more

than one appointment and we are definitely looking at a long journey to go blonde – you would need to think about being golden and copper part of the way through this service," Jack explains.

"Black to red, as long as it's natural, is pretty simple and I would recommend having this done in one salon visit. Black to brunette, again, is not too difficult."

Brunette

"Brunette to black or red is very simple – just one sitting appointment," says Jack. But going blonde is a bit more complicated: "Brunette to blonde is all dependent on your shade of brunette and your required shade of blonde. You could be in a new colour spectrum within one to two appointments."

Red

"Red to brunette would be achievable in one appointment, as long as the customer is OK with being a warmer brown, rather than cooler tones," Jack advises, while red to black in one sitting is, "simple – and you should end up being a sultry dark-haired customer."

Going blonde, however, is, "much harder and depends on the shade of red you are and how blonde you want to be."

Blonde

"A natural blonde can go any of these shades," Jack explains. "Getting back to your natural colour again, though, is far more complicated."

Simple steps homeowners can take now to protect their assets

Head of April King Legal Paul King explains why some homeowners are doing too little, too late to protect their hard-earned assets.



Paul King, Head of April King Legal

1. Care Cost Fees

A lot of people are still unaware that if they need care in later life, their assets will be means-tested by the local authority to help pay for these services. This goes back to the Community Care Act 1990, which came into force in 1993. If someone requires social care in later life, the local authority will look to use the assets of a person until they get down to a lower limit of £14,250, when the local authority will take over the fees.

Paul knows this all too well, after experiencing this personally. "My own grandmother sadly passed away recently at the age of 92. My grandfather had died many years earlier and left everything to her.

When she needed care in the last six years of her life, because my grandfather had left everything to her, the house and all the estate were counted in the local authority's means test.

Our clients tell us, 'We've worked hard all our lives, why should the local authority get it all?'

Just as she died, she had gone down to that lower limit of £14,250 – and that's all that her children inherited."

There are many myths about the steps people can take to protect their assets from being used like this. The main one is that a parent should simply sign their house over to the children now, so it won't be taken into consideration for means testing. That's just not true.

Local authorities will actually look to see if you've 'deliberately deprived' yourself of an asset by giving yourself away, going back over any period in time.

Sometimes people think if the gift is made seven years prior then the house is safe.

This is not so as the seven-year rule only applies to Inheritance Tax and not local authority care.

The solution is for couples to simply not leave everything to each other in the first place.

Paul continues: "What my grandfather could have done is leave his half of the house in trust to his children, stating that they couldn't have it while his wife, my grandmother, was still alive. We call these Property Trust Wills.

If my grandfather had left his half of the house in trust to the children then when my grandmother subsequently received care in her later life she would have only been means tested on her own half of the house, but my grandfather's half would have been safe.

Why should he have to contribute his half when he didn't receive any care?

The important factor is that couples need to act in advance. Once one party dies or loses mental capacity, through a stroke for example, they are no longer in a position to do this legitimate and straightforward type of planning.

It is therefore important for couples to act now even if they may not foresee care fees being an issue."

Paul goes on to explain a further important point. Most clients he sees are surprised to learn that remarriage usually cancels a will and makes the new spouse next in line to inherit, ahead of their own children!

Protecting your half of the house in this way, he suggests, ensures that your children ultimately inherit when the survivor dies.

"Had my grandmother remarried after the death of my grandfather the whole estate could have passed sideways out of the family," says Paul.

It's another important reason for home-owning couples to upgrade to a Property Trust Will.

2. Bloodline Trust Wills

The majority of April King's clients have already made standard "mirror wills" with other firms before approaching the firm. A mirror will is when a couple leave everything to each other on the first death, then to the children when the second partner dies. But modern family life means these type of wills leave a lot to chance.

Explains Paul: "If I have a mirror will leaving everything to my wife and she remarries or goes into care after my death then either the new husband or the local authority are likely to inherit most, if not all, of my estate ahead of my children.

Even if my children are named in my mirror will it is by no means certain that they will inherit anything.

Once again, this is because a remarriage would cancel the will my wife had previously made with me and make the new husband next-of-kin. This often comes as a big shock to my clients who had perhaps thought that all was in order and that the family bloodline would one day inherit.

The same is true for thinking that their children and/or grandchildren will one day benefit under a mirror will. If any of your children should die leaving everything to their husband or wife and that son-in-law or daughter-in-law should then remarry, then your grandchildren would be the ones to lose out under the line of inheritance.

Worse still, someone else's grandchildren would be in line to receive the benefit of all your years of hard work!

I've experienced this in my own family and I'm sure most people have had similar experiences or heard of someone who has. Bloodline trusts will give greater protection to your children."

Paul continues: "These things can be avoided by having a bloodline trusts will. Under these types of wills your children have complete control

and access to the inheritance they receive from you but give added protection from the twists and turns of modern family life. The wording in these wills states that any money left over on their demise must pass to any children born of them – your grandchildren."

3. Lasting Power of Attorney

Paul explains how people often get confused thinking that, because they have made a will, their executors can also deal with assets if there is illness, stroke or some other form of incapacity while they are still alive.

"Everyone should actually have two documents – a will that deals with their estate on death, and a lasting power of attorney that deals with their estate during their lifetime," he says.

The lasting power of attorney is a relatively new introduction and is divided into two parts – one deals with finance, the other deals with health and welfare. In many ways it's similar to a passport; a document that's registered now and one which can be physically handed to the attorneys should the need arise. It allows the attorneys, perhaps the children, to deal with banks and pension companies etc should their parent become incapacitated, but also to deal with matters such as where the parent should be living and how they receive care. Your attorneys, again perhaps your children, must legally act in your best interests at all times. You can choose a number of attorneys to act, either jointly or independently, and April King advises on the various options available.

Couples are often surprised to discover that even joint bank accounts can be frozen until the bank sees sight of a lasting power of attorney document

Having a lasting power of attorney removes the burden on children should ill-health happen further down the line. It helps a family deal with bank accounts and so on during a parent's lifetime and ceases on death. Crucially, you have to complete a lasting power of attorney while they are still in good mental health.

If someone becomes ill through say, a stroke or dementia, this option is lost and the family would have to apply for an order from the Court of Protection – a drawn out and expensive process. It is therefore a good idea for clients to plan ahead and remove any future burden from the family.

Once again, all adults should be thinking of this, particularly where there are children or a business involved. It's not just something to think about when you get older, that's the challenge for us.

People think 'I'm not ill, why do I need to make a power of attorney?'

But they're missing the point. This is a document that has to be done in advance. Paul adds: "The next part is to appoint the attorneys, your children. Don't forget, your children can be the executors of your will and attorneys as well. The lasting power of attorney remains in place until you die unless you want to cancel it. Once it's registered, you don't have to worry if you then develop some debilitating illness. A burden has been removed from the family at an already difficult time."



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Wishes do come true – but take willpower

Lisa Riley cried her eyes out the first time she put on a size 12 T-shirt. "It was the best feeling ever," she says.

The former Emmerdale actress has lost a whopping 12 stone 7lbs in the last year and a half, an achievement that has left her glowing with health and happiness, writes Marion Brennan.

But it hasn't been easy, a point that the 41-year-old, who recently starred in panto at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, makes repeatedly in a new book about her diet journey.

She has gone from a size 28 to a slender size 12, and admits that she only had herself to blame for taking so long to make the transformation.

The book is called The Honesty Diet because it wasn't until she stopped lying to herself that she was able to lose weight, she says.

She confesses she always kept a Warburtons white loaf in the bread bin which she would eat toasted and swimming in butter.

Breakfast would be four slices followed by a bowl of Coco Pops, she told the Daily Mirror in an article promoting her new book.

At work she would have a cheese and onion toastie with chips and a can of Tango but when the snack trolley came round during filming, she would down a prawn sandwich as well as doughnuts and cakes.

Crisps were also a weakness – "I could polish off a tube of Pringles in minutes, and go back for more" – and she always had a few bags of sweets on the go. Pasta and garlic bread were particular favourites.

At a restaurant she never ate fewer than three courses, plus sides and a bottle of Malbec, followed by a chocolate dessert and milky coffee.

Even then, she would often stop on the way home for Pringles and chocolate to eat in front of the TV.

She says: "I can't stress enough how much of a game changer it was for me when I acknowledged what I was eating on a daily basis.

"Once I was realistic about the fact I was the one who had made – and was keeping – myself fat, I was able to start making real, substantial changes.

"It's so important to write things down and face them.

"Over the years, I'd told so many lies to myself about losing weight, I'd completely deafened myself with them.

"I shed a fair few tears in those early days, I can tell you. Later they turned to tears of joy"

"I'd got used to being different from other people and labelling myself the 'fat, funny one'.

"Until I recognized that the only person I was lying to about the mess I'd got myself into was me, I couldn't move on."

She started by writing an 'honesty diary' in which she wrote down each day what time I ate, what she ate, why she ate it and how it made her feel.

Each night she wrote a brief summary of her day, and went to sleep holding an image in her head of what she wanted to look like.

"You write down every little thing you eat so it's in front of you in black and white. Any time you feel up or down, you make a note of it.

"I shed a fair few tears in those early days, I can tell you. Then, later on down the line, they turned to tears of joy."

Now she breakfasts on porridge with honey, and enjoys butternut squash soup with oatcakes for lunch.

A favourite meal in the evening is garlic and chilli cod with roasted spinach and cauliflower, while for snacks she will turn to almonds or cashew nuts and fruit.

She never skips a meal but won't eat after 6.30pm and takes regular exercise.

She warns anyone inspired by her example it won't be easy but it will be worth it.

"I'm not one of those people who's going to say you can eat chocolate and ice cream and still drop pounds because that's simply not true.

"If you're overweight, you're probably eating too much," she says.

Following her weight loss, the actress had surgery to remove the excess skin she was left with as a result, and has a new man in her life.

She says now: "Dieting will always be a way of life for me now.

"People notice all the time that I'm careful but that is because I have to be.

"I am walking, talking, smiling evidence that with the right guidance, determination and self-belief – and a healthy dose of willpower – you can be the size you've always wanted to be.

"Back when I was delving into my wardrobe and pulling out size 28 clothes, I never dreamed I'd be able to walk into a shop and pick up a size 12 knowing it would fit me.

"But now that's my reality every time I buy new clothes. And my God, I love it."

● Lisa Riley's Honesty Diet is published by Michael Joseph, price £16.99.



Shining a light on the dangers of laser pens



Police footage of a laser pen being shone at a force helicopter from the street

SQUADRON Leader Gary James is convinced it wouldn't happen if people realised the consequences.

Pilots being distracted and even blinded by lasers is a very real problem," says the flight safety officer at RAF Shawbury.

"Laser illumination has affected our own pilots on numerous occasions over the past few years. What may be seen like harmless fun to the laser operator can be debilitating and potentially fatal to the crew."

New legislation which could see people who point laser pens at aircraft – or other vehicles – facing up to five years in jail is currently going through Parliament.

Flt Lt Jonathan Price, an RAF pilot of 36 years based at RAF Cosford, was himself targeted while flying around the base about

Report by Mark Andrews

advertising devices online which are up to 2,000 times more powerful.

One such advert claims its hand-held device is "strong enough to burn holes, pop balloons, and start fires from across the room", "has a range of 50 miles", and "can be seen from outer space."

The danger that something like this could cause in the wrong hands does not bear thinking about.

Margot James, the Stourbridge MP and Consumer Minister, says these devices are a real concern, and has promised tighter checks at UK ports to stop them getting into the country.

More than 150 incidents of eye injuries involving laser pointers have been reported since 2013, the vast majority of these involving children.

Miss James says in many of these cases neither children nor their parents have had any idea of how dangerous these devices can be. She says the Government would be working to raise awareness of the risks associated with laser pointers.

In 2016 the Civil Aviation Authority recorded a total of 1,258 incidents involving laser pens across the UK, with Birmingham Airport the second most targeted site in England with 73 reports.

The issue has been raised in the House of Commons by Mark Pritchard, MP for The Wrekin, who said: "These incidents are increasing in number and endanger crew, passengers and aircraft. Action is needed before a serious accident occurs."

Assuming it passes through Parliament, the proposed new law will remove the need to prove intent, making it easier to secure a conviction, and would also extend it to cover other vehicles, such as cars, buses and trains.

Ollie Dismore, a police helicopter pilot for more than 30 years, says he himself has been targeted 20 times with a laser.

Calling the issue of laser attacks a "growing problem", especially with the powerful lasers that are now available, he said "you will not find a police pilot who has not been targeted multiple times".

The tightening of the law has been backed by the British Airline Pilots Association, and Sqn Ldr James also says it is a step in the right direction.

"We welcome new legislation that protects aircrew and highlights to the general public the dangers of using a laser," he says.

But while the new laws should make it easier to secure a conviction, the hard work will be educating the public about the possible consequences of playing around with these seemingly innocuous devices.

two years ago. "I was just flying around the local area when I became aware of this light being shone at me," he says. "While I wasn't blinded, it was distracting, I was thinking about it when I was trying to do other things."

He says pilots are trained to take certain steps to minimise the risks, which might include adjusting the pilot's seating position so that something is obstructing the view of the laser. "In the plane that I fly, I can adjust the angle I am flying at slightly, so that I can't see the beam, but a pilot trying to land an airliner at Birmingham Airport cannot do that," he says.

It is not just pilots who are at risk. There have been reports of them being pointed at trains and other vehicles, and there are also concerns that some of the more powerful devices have been causing eye injuries.

Present legislation says that only laser pens that are "considered safe" can be sold in the UK, with the guidance being that they should not be stronger than one milliwatt. But overseas retailers have been



Squadron Leader Gary James



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Why it's now Strictly business for Ore

Celebrity dancers and their professional partners will return to Birmingham Arena tomorrow (Friday), Saturday and Sunday for five shows.

Strictly Come Dancing fans can feast on the dancing shoes and sequins of Gemma Atkinson and Aljaž Skorjanec; Alexandra Burke and Gorka Marquez; Susan Calman and Kevin Clifton; Davood Ghadami and Nadiya Bychkova; Joe McFadden and Katya Jones; Debbie McGee and Giovanni Pernice; and Jonnie Peacock and Oti Mabuse.

The fabulous celebrities and professional dancers will be joining the tour judging panel of Craig Revel Horwood, Bruno Tonioli and Darcey Bussell.

To round off the sparkling line-up, the tour will be hosted by reigning Strictly Champion Ore Oduba. They will all be joined by more Strictly professional dancers, the Strictly singers and the Strictly live band.

For Ore, it's a dream come true to be involved in the show once more. He's a Strictly addict who watches every minute of every show.

"If there's a slight mistake, my heart sinks and beats unhealthily fast. Even before the titles run, I can feel what the dancers are feeling. What would be funny is if someone filmed me, Gogglebox-style, watching Strictly. It's like a one-man-band of weird."

Ore admitted he'd missed the show so much that he jumped at the chance to get involved when he was asked.

"I'm not pining to be doing it again, but if there's something I miss it's the camaraderie and the backstage buzz. There's nothing like that buzz."

One of the most popular performers at Birmingham Arena will be Debbie McGee. The star was the surprise package of last year's show and didn't realise the chemistry she'd have with her partner, Giovanni Pernice.

"It's one in a million. We realised we wanted to dance together, but I don't think we realised the absolute chemistry we'd have."

DESERVED

"There's a magic that is happening. The other dancers took the mickey out of us. He really cares, he doesn't just care about me, he cares about everybody. He makes everyone feel special and that's what Paul used to do, and that's what I love about him."

"We've laughed about how similar we are. Why does it happen in life? I don't know. We just have this incredible bond. I don't care because we had the most amazing time and we said, 'Lets just enjoy the last three dances', and for me, all I wanted to do was to do the best I possibly could, which I did, so I'm happy. We all deserved to win. It doesn't matter because we had a great time."

Last year's show was the 15th series of Strictly Come Dancing and featured winner Joe McFadden along with runners-up Debbie McGee, Gemma Atkinson and Alexandra Burke.

Joe says he found himself under pressure during the TV show. "You're concentrating on each move. I know she's (Katya) got her eyes out looking for me doing it wrong and having a turned-in foot when it should be turned out and not having fingers pointed at the end."

Despite his success in the show, Joe and the runners-up didn't stick around to party after the Glitterball presentation.

"There was a little bit of a party Saturday night. The four finalists were all so exhausted – I don't think we partied very hard. And I of course had the obligatory cold which descended instantly, the second I won."

Alexandra Burke made her name on another reality TV show – The X Factor – and has got engaged since Strictly ended just before Christmas.

She shared a photo showing her hand with the words "I said yes" written on it, after getting engaged in Paris on December 18.

"So grateful for this amazing man in my life who has supported my family and I through so much," she added.

"We decided to keep this between us for a while to enjoy this special moment and that's why we haven't

Let's dance – Alexandra Burke and
Debbie McGee will perform



*If there's something
I miss it's the
camaraderie and
the backstage buzz*

said anything . . . Something so amazing honestly felt so overwhelming because there was only one person I wanted to call when it happened. I know she is smiling and very happy for us both - because little did I know she knew about it.

"For those who guessed and have left such beautiful messages – thank you. Josh is someone who makes me so happy and I've never felt this kind of love before. Here's to an amazing future that's filled with love, joy and so much happiness. I love you Joshua Ginnelly. I can't wait to see what our future brings and what God provides for us xxx"

Gemma Atkinson, meanwhile, has fuelled rumours of romance with Ryan Giggs, since the show ended. The duo had a lunch date at a restaurant in Manchester, even though they have denied dating.

Atkinson said she was bored by the speculation: "Anyone I hang about with of the opposite sex, people say I'm going out with. Whenever we all go out together as friends people say we're in a relationship."

Atkinson is best known for her role as Lisa Hunter on Hollyoaks and for the character Tamzin Bayle on Casualty. She also plays Carly Hope on Emmerdale and is an ex-glamour model.

The Manchester entertainer rose to fame on Hollyoaks



and her star has continued to rise. She has previously featured in the reality show Soapstar Superstar as well as Celebrity Weakest Link and Celebrity Mastermind.

● For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & star every Friday.

Iain Mackay and Jenna Roberts



Iain's ballet goodbye

TOMORROW night (Friday) the acclaimed Royal Ballet Sinfonia returns to the Symphony Hall in Birmingham for their annual Evening of Music and Dance.

Compered by Birmingham Royal Ballet company director David Bintley, led by principal conductor Paul Murphy and joined on stage by BRB dancers, this event is an extraordinary evening of beautiful music and stunning dance in one of the best concert halls in the world.

This year's programme will include danced excerpts from Don Quixote, La Fille mal gardée and The Sleeping Beauty, alongside Humperdinck's overture to Hansel and Gretel, Korngold's suite from the film

The Adventures of Robin Hood and Elgar's beautiful miniature, Sospiri. The programme also includes a pas de deux from Christopher Wheeldon's After The Rain, a company premiere for Birmingham Royal Ballet.

This performance will be particularly special because, after an incredible 18 year career with Birmingham Royal Ballet, principal dancer Iain Mackay will give his final performance. He is to dance the Adagio from Spartacus with Jenna Roberts.

One of Birmingham Royal Ballet's most valued and versatile dancers, Iain's ability to take on everything from classical princes to intense dramatic roles has seen him become a firm favourite with audiences at Birmingham Hippodrome and at the company's touring venues across the UK.

Beautiful start to blockbuster year



There is a blockbuster 2018 ahead at Birmingham Hippodrome, following the final performance of the big festive panto Cinderella on January 28.

It kicks off with Beautiful The Carole King Musical (January 31 to February 3), based on the life of one of America's finest songwriters. The West End hit is making a rapid return to the Hurst Street theatre following its success there last year. It stars Brontë Barbé, pictured, as Carole King.

Dance is always a priority at the Hippodrome and there is a real anticipation around the arrival of Matthew Bourne's radical reworking of Cinderella (Feb 6-10) in a London blitz context. Some may have seen this stylish ballet when it was screened by the BBC at Christmas.

Then Birmingham Royal Ballet return to their home theatre, for the first time since their festive treat The Nutcracker, to perform spectacular family favourite The Sleeping Beauty (Feb 13-24). The production harks back to the glory days of Imperial Russian ballet with a score by Tchaikovsky and choreography by Marius Petipa.

February promises to be a funny month with lots of top one-nighter comedy, not least Luisa Omielan's Dead Funny Birmingham's Big Comedy Gala (Feb 28). Confirmed guests include Sara Pascoe, Nish Kumar, Tom Allen, Suzi Ruffell and Ellie Taylor. All proceeds go to Helena's Hospice Foundation.

Other laughter makers at the Hippodrome include Sean Lock (Feb 27), Dara O'Briain for three nights from March 1 and Jon Richardson on March 10.

Opera takes centre stage when Welsh National Opera visit with La Forza del Destino (March 6), Don Giovanni (Mar 7) and Tosca (Mar 8).

Shiamak Datar, one of the most sought-after choreographers in Bollywood, brings the vibrant Spirit of India with 250 dancers to the Hippodrome on March 11.

It will be a case of Don't Cry For Me Argentina when popular musical Evita returns (Mar 20-24) and riotous farce with The Play That Goes Wrong (Mar 27-31).

The first of the mega-shows arrives in April when evergreen West End and Broadway hit Wicked looks at the Oz story from a different angle, April 4 to 29. The summer's big show sees Roald Dahl, the RSC and Tim Minchin's talents combine for Matilda The Musical from July 3 to September 8.

Superska sounds start the weekend

ENERGETIC eight-piece band The Superskas bring mod and skinhead favourite sounds to the Robin 2 in Bilston tomorrow night (Friday). There is plenty for prog rock fans to enjoy at the Mount Pleasant venue with G2 Definitive Genesis on Saturday night, then Lifesigns perform tracks from new album Cardington on Sunday. New Jersey outfit the Billy Walton Band play on Wednesday and its jump 'n' jive outfit King Pleasure & The Biscuit Boys with The Miss Fortunes on Thursday.

Violin sensation plays Vivaldi masterpiece

Acclaimed violinist Joshua Bell will be performing Vivaldi's The Four Seasons at Symphony Hall, Birmingham, on Tuesday. Performing with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, his concert will also include works by Beethoven and Edgar Meyer. Also at Symphony Hall, the world's famous brass band, Black Dyke Band, are in concert on Sunday afternoon and John Wilson conducts the CBSO for a Leonard Bernstein programme on Wednesday.

ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

BENJAMINS BANQUETING SUITES

Halesowens premier wedding venue

Benjamins opened in Birmingham Street, Halesowen in December 1997, the building was originally The Primitive Methodist Chapel and supporting buildings erected in 1868 according to the stone over the main entrance, a foundation stone was laid in August 1889 by the then Mayor of Dudley Benjamin Hingley Esq. MP and although not named after Benjamin Hingley the stone was certainly the inspiration for the name of the Banqueting Suite.

The stone now takes pride of place over the fire place in the Cornbow Room.

Set over 2 floors Benjamins can accommodate functions of all sizes upto 450 guests and indeed upto 650 guests if the whole of the building is used for one function as was the case in August 2011!



The Cornbow Room is on the lower floor, it is suitable for parties up to 200 guests, has its own stage for DJ, Band or any other entertainment with access to the large patio area which can be used for Barbeques or Pig Roasts weather

permitting, also due to its layout is ideally suited for smaller events.

The Aldridge and Beaumont Suites are adjacent on the first floor and are usually used as one room for larger parties, ideal for formal weddings due to its open plan layout.

For civil ceremonies where the guests for the ceremony are 100 or less the ceremony is usually conducted in the Beaumont Suite whilst the removable wall is in place between the 2 Banqueting Suites and then the room can be opened out for the Wedding Breakfast and evening guests.

For civil ceremonies where the guest numbers exceed 100 both rooms can be open and used for the service and can accommodate up to 200 guests for the service.

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CHOICE



Paddy McGuinness

Take Me Out (ITV, 6.45pm)
Paddy McGuinness continues to arrange more dates for his returning panel of 30 single girls. This time, the Love Lift delivers a model from the Wirral, a caricaturist from Blackpool, a student from Brighton. If any of these men are to secure a chance at love, they must first impress the single ladies enough for them to signal their approval by keeping their lights on.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** Mary Berry Everyday. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News: Weather. **1.15** Live Snooker: The Masters. Coverage of the opening semi-final. **4.30** Final Score. **5.30** BBC News. **5.40** Regional Programme. **5.50** And They're Off for Sport Relief.
6.30 **Pointless Celebrities.** Gail Emms, Audley Harrison, David Spinx, Susie Amy, Katy Brand, Brian Belo, Lisa Maffia and Marvin "Romeo" Dawkins compete in a quiz for stars who found fame in the noughties.
7.20 **Wedding Day Winners.** Phil and Beks from Ascot take on Kirsty and David from Swansea, as Lorraine Kelly and Rob Beckett challenge them to compete in a series of tasks for the chance to win a televised wedding and a dream honeymoon. This week's celebrity wedding guests are Jimmy Osmond, McFly's Tom Fletcher and Harry Judd, Pussycat Doll Ashley Roberts, First Dates maître d' Fred Sirieix, and comedian Tom Allen.
8.20 **Casualty.** Elle and Jacob realise they must tackle Blake's problems head-on when his friend Miles is admitted to the ED.
9.10 **BBC News:** Weather.
9.30 **Hard Sun.** Renko investigates evidence uncovered by DCS Roland Bell that suggests Hicks and Butler were corrupt, but she faces troubling questions at home when Daniel, fresh from his visit by Grace, begins to ask uncomfortable questions about both Hard Sun and his father. Meanwhile, a disillusioned former aid worker who believes the apocalyptic warning suffers a dangerous crisis of faith, and the spree killer confesses his sins to his priest, Fr Dennis, but the seal of the confessional causes complications for the police inquiry. Pre-apocalyptic sci-fi thriller, starring Jim Sturgess and Agyness Deyn.
10.30 **Match of the Day.** Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches, including Brighton & Hove Albion v Chelsea at the AMEX Stadium and Burnley v Manchester United.
12.00 The NFL Show. **12.30** Film: Papadopoulos & Sons. (2012) **2.15** Weather for the Week Ahead. **2.20** BBC News.

BBC2

6.10 The Wonder of Animals. (R) **6.40** Naomi's Nightmares of Nature. **7.10** The Pets Factor. **7.30** Matilda and the Ramsay Bunch. **7.45** Matilda and the Ramsay Bunch. **8.00** The Designers. **8.30** Deadly Top 10. (R) **9.00** Robot Wars. (R) **10.00** Steve Backshall's Extreme Mountain Challenge. (R) **11.00** The Snow Wolf Family and Me. (R) **12.00** The Haiky Bikers' Mediterranean Adventure. (R) **1.00** A Vicar's Life. (R) **1.30** Back to the Land with Kate Humble. (R) **2.30** Trust Me, I'm a Doctor. (R) **3.00** Tennis: Australian Open 2018. **4.30** Live Snooker: The Masters. Hazel Irvine presents concluding coverage of the opening semi-final. **5.30** Tom Kerridge: Lose Weight for Good. (R) **6.00** **Hugh's Wild West.** Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's wildlife-themed odyssey through the West Country continues, as he explores the ancient woods and valleys of Dartmoor on a mission to find out more about his favourite garden bird, the long-tailed tit. Meeting local naturalist John Walters, he learns how family life is the key to survival for these sociable birds, and with the help of nature expert Leo Gubert, he manages to track down a hibernating dormouse. Plus, a close encounter with some feisty wood ants.
7.00 **Live Snooker: The Masters.** Hazel Irvine presents coverage of the second semi-final, played over the best of 11 frames on day seven at Alexandra Palace in London. Despite being an invitational event, this tournament is considered one of the more prestigious on the snooker calendar, and with the winner set to claim a cheque for £200,000, both of the players in this contest will be eager to progress to tomorrow's final. With commentary and analysis by Steve Davis, Ken Doherty, Stephen Hendry, John Parrott, Dennis Taylor and John Virgo.
10.30 **QI XL.** Aisling Bea, Russell Brand and Noel Fielding join Alan Davies and host Sandi Toksvig for an extended edition of the unconventional panel quiz, this time focusing on "The Occult".
11.15 **Performance Live: I Told My Mum I Was Going on an RE Trip.** Drama, exploring Britain's many varying attitudes to abortion.
12.00 Snooker: The Masters – Extra. **2.00** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Bottom Knockers Street. (R) **6.20** Bottom Knockers Street. (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister Six. **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.55** Scrambled!: Fangbone. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Be Cool, Scooby-Do! (R) **9.05** Scrambled!: Wishart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** James Martin's Saturday Morning. **11.20** The Hungry Sailors. (R) **12.20** Countrywise. (R) **12.50** ITV News: Weather. **1.00** Dancing on Ice. (R) **3.00** Celebrity Catchphrase. (R) **4.00** Tipping Point. (R) **5.00** The Chase. (R)
6.00 **Regional Programme:** Weather.
6.05 **ITV News:** Weather.
6.20 **New You've Been Framed!** Harry Hill narrates more comical mishaps filmed by viewers, including a cat demonstrates CPR skills, and a holiday-maker who seems to have forgotten to pack any clothes.
6.45 **Take Me Out.** A model from the Wirral, a caricaturist from Blackpool, a student from London, and a musician from Brighton all hope to impress Paddy McGuinness's single ladies.
8.00 **The Voice UK.** Emma Willis presents as the coaches preside over the third round of Blind Auditions. As always, Jennifer Hudson, Will.i.am, Tom Jones and Ally Murs are tasked with assessing the potential star power of each contestant based on nothing but the power of their singing alone, only catching sight of each performer once they have delivered their verdict. The Blind Auditions represent the concept of The Voice format at its most pure, as each of the coaches aim to fill their teams with genuine undiscovered talent, before progressing the competition to its next stage.
9.30 **Through the Keyhole.** Keith Lemon invites Paddy McGuinness, Gregg Wallace and Scarlett Moffatt to guess "who habitates in a house like this", as he invades another three celebrities' homes.
10.30 **ITV News:** Weather.
10.45 **Film: Jaws 3.** (1983) Thriller sequel, starring Dennis Quaid.
12.30 Jackpot247. **3.00** Babushka. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.00 3rd Rock from the Sun. (R) **6.25** 3rd Rock from the Sun. (R) **6.50** The King of Queens. (R) **7.15** The King of Queens. (R) **7.40** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.05** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.35** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **9.05** Frasier. (R) **9.35** Frasier. (R) **10.05** Frasier. (R) **10.35** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.05** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **12.00** The Simpsons. (R) **12.30** The Simpsons. (R) **1.00** The Simpsons. (R) **1.25** Come Dine with Me. (R) **2.25** Coast vs Country. (R) **3.25** A Place in the Sun. (R) **4.30** A Place in the Sun. (R) **5.30** The Secret Life of the Zoo. (R)
6.30 **Channel 4 News.**
7.00 **Great Canal Journeys.** Timothy West and Prunella Scales explore the Norfolk Broads. This is the first time the couple have visited the area, and they learn about the unique way of life that has developed over the centuries in this network of slow-moving rivers, fens, marshes and waterlogged woodlands. Their trip takes them to a marshman's cottage, the ruins of St Benet's Abbey, and a local Norfolk wherry, and brings to mind events from the book Swallows and Amazons. (R)
8.00 **Village of the Five.** Five villages from this week's heats compete for a place in the grand final, as Penelope Keith tasks archaeologist Alex Langlands, garden designer Juliet Sargeant and craft expert Patrick Grant with narrowing the field in the Western Zone.
9.00 **Film: Sicario.** (2015) Premiere. An FBI agent is recruited to join an elite government task force based on the border between the US and Mexico, charged with preventing drugs being smuggled into the country. The team is sent on a secret mission, and the new recruit is forced to question everything she believes in order to survive. Crime drama, starring Emily Blunt, Josh Brolin and Benicio Del Toro.
11.25 **Film: Salt.** (2010) A CIA agent goes on the run after she is accused of being a sleeper assassin sent to murder the Russian president. Action thriller, starring Angelina Jolie.
1.10 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. (R) **2.05** The Lie Detective. (R) **2.45** Hollyoaks. (R) **4.50** The Autistic Gardener. (R) **5.45** Draw It! (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **10.00** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. **10.40** Pets Make You Laugh Out Loud 2. (R) **11.05** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.05** Police Interceptors: Fatal Four. (R) **1.05** The A-Team. (R) **2.05** The A-Team. (R) **3.10** Nightmare Tenants, Slum Landlords. (R) **5.10** Rich House, Poor House. (R)
6.05 **The Wonderful World of Puppies.** The documentary reveals how dogs learn to communicate with each other, via everything from barks to squeaks and yelps, and subtle gestures with the ears, eyes, tail and snout.
7.00 **Greatest Ever Celebrity Wind Ups.** Joe Pasquale narrates another selection of pranks pulled by British celebrities, placing their fellow stars on the receiving end. This time, Olly Murs tricks Caroline Flack with a terrifying driverless car journey, and mischievous duo Ant and Dec catch out chat show host Jeremy Kyle with what might possibly be the oddest guest he has ever encountered. Stephen Mulhern helps rugby star Matt Dawson prank fellow player Austin Healey, and Ben Hanlin recalls the time he persuaded Rylan Clark-Neal into taking a memorable lift ride.
8.00 **Blind Date.** A dental manager must choose between a picture framer, a health care worker and a sausage maker, and in a Blind Date first, a past contestant is stood up by his date. 5 News Weekend.
9.00 **Football on 5: The Championship.** Colin Murray introduces highlights from the weekend's games in the Championship, including Wolverhampton Wanderers v Nottingham Forest and Leeds United v Millwall.
9.55 **Football on 5: Goal Rush.** Colin Murray introduces all the goals from the weekend's games in Leagues One and Two, including AFC Wimbledon v Blackpool and Plymouth Argyle v Wigan Athletic.
10.25 **Celebrity Big Brother.** Highlights of the housemates' past 24 hours under the all-seeing eye of Big Brother, as they try to get used to living alongside one another.
11.30 **The X-Files.** The sci-fi mystery drama returns. Gillian Anderson and David Duchovny star. (R)
12.15 SuperCasino. **3.10** GPs: Behind Closed Doors. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Shipwrecks: Britain's Sunken History **8.00** Spiral – Earth's Frozen Kingdom **9.00** The Vietnam War **11.50** Top of the Pops: 1985 **12.30** Neil Sedaka: King of Song **1.30** Neil Sedaka Says: All You Need is the Music **2.15** Shipwrecks: Britain's Sunken History **3.15** Close
ITV2
11.25 Take Me Out **12.40** You've Been Framed! **Gold 1.15** Film: St Trinian's 2: The Legend of Fritton's Gold (2009) **2.15** FYI Daily **2.20** Film: St Trinian's 2: The Legend of Fritton's Gold (2009) **3.20** Film: The Smurfs 2 (2013) **4.20** FYI Daily **4.25** Film: The Smurfs 2 (2013) **5.25** Film: The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002) **6.25** FYI Daily **6.30** Film: The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002) **9.00** Film: Fast & Furious (2009) **10.00** FYI Daily **10.05** Film: Fast & Furious (2009) **11.10** Family Guy **12.05** American Dad! **1.05** Release the Hounds **2.05** Ibiza Weekender **2.55** Teleshopping
ITV3
1.55 Rosemary & Thyme **2.55** Film: Columbo Goes to the Guillotine (1989) **4.55** Midsomer Murders **11.00** Lewis **1.00** On the Buses **2.00** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping
ITV4
11.50 FYI Daily **11.55** Film: Superman (1978) **1.30** ITV Racing: Live from Ascot. Coverage of today's race meetings at Ascot and Haydock Park. **4.00** Film: Goldfinger (1964) **5.05** FYI Daily **5.10** Film: Goldfinger (1964) **6.15** Pawn Stars **7.15** Film: Police Academy 3: Back in Training (1986) **8.25** FYI Daily **8.30** Film: Police Academy 3: Back in Training (1986) **9.00** Film: The Blues Brothers (1980) **11.40** Film: Beetlejuice (1988) **12.50** FYI Daily **12.55** Film: Beetlejuice (1988) **1.35** Car Crash Global: Caught on Camera **2.35** Tommy Cooper **3.00** Teleshopping
E4
12.30 Film: Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (2009) **2.20** Rude (sh) Tube Shorts **2.30** The Goldbergs **5.00** The Big Bang Theory **8.00** Film: The Karate Kid (2010) **10.40** Gogglebox **12.50** Rude Tube **1.55** Gogglebox **2.55** First Dates **3.50** How I Met Your Mother **Film4**
11.00 The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie (2004) **1.00** Vice Versa (1988) **2.55** Fantastic Voyage (1966) **5.00** Congo (1995) **7.15** Source Code (2011) **9.00** The Abyss (1989) **11.45** The Piper (2015) **1.55** Intruders (2011) **4.00** Close

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CHOICE



Linda Bassett

Call the Midwife (BBC1, 8pm)

New series. A new midwife joins the team as the area is rocked by power cuts and blizzards. The new arrival is delayed by the weather and falls ill as soon as she arrives. However, she is quickly dragged from her sick bed to assist with a difficult birth. Nurse Crane and Dr Turner treat an elderly cancer patient who faces losing her house due to slum clearances, and try to convince Sergeant Woolf to allow her to die at home. Jenny Agutter, Leonie Elliott, Linda Bassett, Judy Parfitt, Helen George, Laura Main, Victoria Yeates and Annabelle Apsion star.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.30** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News: Weather. **1.15** Money for Nothing. (R) **2.15** Escape to the Country. (R) **3.15** Lifeline. **3.25** Big Cats. (R) **4.25** Songs of Praise. **5.00** The Coronation. (R)

6.00 BBC News.

6.20 Regional Programme.

6.30 **Countryfile.** Anita Rani visits Leicester to discover why spring plants are flowering in winter in the city. She also pays a visit to the city's university to learn about Britain's 300 species of rare plants. John Craven attends the building of a new birdwatching hide at Rutland Water, and Tom Heap examines the challenges faced by rural fire services.

7.30 **Still Open All Hours.** Granville encourages Gastric to enter an art competition, and faces the challenge of selling a box full of mysterious tins, despite not knowing what they contain.

8.00 **Call the Midwife.** A new midwife joins the team as the area is rocked by power cuts and blizzards, but she falls ill as soon as she arrives and soon has to assist with a difficult birth.

9.00 **McMafia.** Semiyon's fortunes seem to be on the rise – until he is arrested in Tel Aviv. Alex and Rebecca announce their engagement, and Lyudmilla sees a chance to regain her freedom.

10.00 BBC News.

10.20 Regional Programme.

10.30 **Match of the Day 2.** Mark Chapman reviews the day's Premier League action, featuring highlights of Sunday's only game Southampton v Tottenham Hotspur at St Mary's Stadium.

11.20 **Man Like Mobeen.** Eight years that his father is dying. When Mobeen agrees to visit him one last time, he is unprepared for the terrible secret he learns and the favour the old man has to ask.

11.40 **Man Like Mobeen.** An anti-Islam march comes through the neighbourhood, and Mobeen ends up sharing a police van with the leader when he takes the blame for Aki's counter-protest. Last in the series.

12.05 Weather for the Week Ahead. **12.10** BBC News.

BBC2

6.15 A to Z of TV Gardening. (R) **6.35** The Instant Gardener. (R) **7.20** Gardeners' World. (R) **7.50** Greatest Gardens. (R) **8.20** Monty Don's Paradise Gardens. (R) **9.20** Countryfile. (R) **10.15** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.45** Food & Drink. (R) **12.15** MOTD2 Extra. **1.00** Live Snooker: The Masters. Coverage of the opening eight frames of the final. **5.15** Ski Sunday.

6.00 **Tennis: Australian Open 2018.**

Kat Downes presents action from day seven of the opening Grand Slam tournament of the year, which takes place at Melbourne Park, and featured the latest fourth-round matches.

7.00 **Live Snooker: The Masters.** Hazel Irvine presents concluding coverage of the final from Alexandra Palace, London, where a maximum of 11 frames will be played to decide this year's champion. Last year's showpiece match was a closely fought contest, with Ronnie O'Sullivan claiming a 10-7 victory over Joe Perry to win the competition for a record-breaking seventh time, putting him ahead of Stephen Hendry in the all-time list. With commentary and analysis by Steve Davis, Ken Doherty, Stephen Hendry, John Parrott, Dennis Taylor and John Virgo.

11.00 **The Mash Report.** Nish Kumar and a cast of comedy correspondents present the satirical and surreal take on the week's news. (R)

11.30 **Insert Name Here.** Comedy panel game in which host Sue Perkins asks teams captained by Richard Osman and Josh Widdicombe to answer questions about famous people who share a name. (R)

12.00 **Film: All Good Things.** (2010) The heir of a wealthy family marries a medical student, but is suspected of murdering her when she disappears without trace. Crime drama, starring Ryan Gosling and Kirsten Dunst. **1.35** **Film: Good Morning Karachi.** (2013) A Pakistani woman hopes to pursue a career as a model despite disapproval from her mother and rising tensions in the country. Drama, with Anna Ilyas and Be Raana Zafar. **3.00** **Sign Zone: Question Time.** Topical debate from Hereford. (R) **4.00** **Holby City.** Essie struggles to use her head over her heart as she gets involved with Gaskell's trial, and Oliver is transferred to AAU for a change of scene. (R) **4.55** This is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITY: Sooty. **6.10** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.20** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister Six. **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.55** Scrambled!: Ben 10. **8.10** Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Spy School. **9.05** Scrambled!: Wishart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** River Monsters. (R) **10.00** Peston on Sunday. **11.00** The Martin Lewis Money Show. (R) **11.25** The Voice UK. (R) **12.55** ITV News: Weather. **1.00** Britain's Best Walks with Julia Bradbury. (R) **1.30** Britain's Brightest Family. (R) **2.00** The Cruise: Return to the Mediterranean. (R) **2.30** **Film: Kindergarten Cop.** (1990) Comedy, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger. **4.35** Regional Programme: Weather. **4.45** ITV News: Weather. **5.00** The Chase: Celebrity Special. (R)

6.00 **Dancing on Ice.** Phillip Schofield and Holly Willoughby present disco week, as the remaining 11 celebrities and their professional partners perform to impress judges Jayne Torvill, Christopher Dean, Ashley Banjo and Jason Gardiner and avoid having to compete in a skate-off to remain in the contest for another week.

8.10 **Vera.** A mother of two is found murdered in her back garden. Vera and Aiden investigate the case, and delve into the disturbing secrets and ongoing conflicts that lurk beneath the surface of the victim's seemingly peaceful suburban community. The case takes a more complicated turn when the dead woman's estranged family make an unexpected reappearance, and while several of her neighbours may have had cause to carry out a crime of passion, her relatives may have had compelling motives of their own to kill. Guest starring Rita Tushingham.

10.10 ITV News: Weather.

10.25 **Peston on Sunday.** Political magazine, presented by Robert Peston, with Allegra Stratton. (R)

11.25 **Next of Kin.** Mona travels to Lahore to identify Kareem's body and though the trip presents an opportunity to meet Danny, it instead leads her into grave danger in a remote corner of the city. (R)

12.20 Great Art. (R) **1.10** Jackpot247. **3.00** Sunday Night at the Palladium. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.10 Jamie's Comfort Food. (R) **6.20** The King of Queens. (R) **6.45** The King of Queens. (R) **7.10** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.00** Frasier. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast. (R) **1.30** The Simpsons. (R) **2.00** The Simpsons. (R) **2.30** The Simpsons. (R) **3.00** **Film: Capture the Flag.** (2015) Premiere. Animated sci-fi adventure, with the voice of Sam Fink. **4.30** **Film: Aladdin.** (1992) Disney animated adventure, with the voice of Robin Williams.

6.35 **Channel 4 News.**

7.00 **Posh Pawn.** New series. Memorabilia expert Lawrence's knowledge of cars is put to the test as James gets his hands on an E-Type Jaguar worth over £100,000. Plus, Claudia values a customer's extravagant impulse buy and Lawrence goes to Hertfordshire to appraise some unusual artwork.

8.00 **The Biggest Little Railway in the World.** The train struggles to cross the first hill on the line – which is only a gentle incline compared to the vast rises to come. The team also needs to build a track-stabilising device to prevent the train from falling over, while Claire comes across a rocky stream near Fort Augustus, and makes plans to build a curving trestle bridge.

9.00 **SAS: Who Dares Wins.** The recruits are divided into two teams for a series of challenges designed to test both their ability to bond as a group, including a time trial run across the Sahara Desert.

10.00 **8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown.** Jimmy Carr hosts as Jon Richardson and Joe Wilkinson take on guest captain Kevin Bridges and Jessica Knappett. Dr John Cooper Clarke helps out in Dictionary Corner. (R)

10.55 **Film: Season of the Witch.** (2011) Two knights escort a suspected witch to trial during the Black Death, but are not prepared for the powers she possesses. Fantasy adventure, with Nicolas Cage and Ron Perlman.

12.45 **Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners.** (R) **1.40** **The Lie Detective.** (R) **2.25** Grand Designs Australia. (R) **3.20** Location, Location, Location. (R) **4.15** KOTV Boxing Weekly. **4.45** Coast vs Country. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Little Princess. **6.10** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **6.20** Poppy Cat. (R) **6.35** Whisper. (R) **6.40** Milkshake! Bopping About. (R) **6.45** Simon. (R) **6.50** Peppa Pig. (R) **7.00** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.10** Thomas & Friends. (R) **7.20** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.30** Olly the Little White Van. (R) **7.40** Blaze and the Monster Machines. (R) **8.00** Paw Patrol. (R) **8.20** Nella the Princess Knight. **8.35** Noddy: Toyland Detective. (R) **8.50** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.10** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.25** Digby Dragon. (R) **9.40** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. **10.15** Football on 5: The Championship. (R) **11.10** Football on 5: Goal Rush. (R) **11.45** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.45** **Film: Pixels.** (2015) Sci-fi comedy, starring Adam Sandler. **2.35** **Film: Big Daddy.** (1999) Comedy, starring Adam Sandler. **4.15** **Film: Mr Deeds.** (2002) Romantic comedy remake, starring Adam Sandler and Winona Ryder. **5.20** 5 News Update. **5.25** **Film: Mr Deeds.** (2002) Concluded.

6.00 **Film: Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves.** (1991) An English nobleman returns home from the crusades to find his father has been murdered and the local people are repressed by the tyrannical rule of the Sheriff of Nottingham. Branded an outlaw, he recruits a group of bandits to fight for justice and protect the downtrodden. Action adventure, starring Kevin Costner, Alan Rickman, Morgan Freeman and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio.

7.00 5 News Update.

7.05 **Film: Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves.** (1991) Concluded.

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 **Celebrity Big Brother.** Highlights of another day for the illustrious inhabitants as they cope with the day-to-day complications of life under the all-seeing eye of Big Brother, while also dealing with one another's quirks and foibles.

10.00 **Film: Life As We Know It.** (2010) Two people who do not get on are forced to live together when they are named guardians of their dead friends' baby daughter. Comedy, starring Katherine Heigl and Josh Duhamel.

12.10 **Film: That's My Boy.** (2012) Comedy, starring Adam Sandler and Andy Samberg. **2.15** SuperCasino. **3.10** GPS: Behind Closed Doors. (R) **4.00** Get Your Tatts Out: Kavos Ink. **4.45** House Doctor. (R) **5.10** Wildlife SOS. (R) **5.35** Divine Designs. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Only Connect **7.30** University Challenge **8.00** The Tea Trail with Simon Reeve **9.00** Hunt v Lada: F1's Greatest Racing Rivals **10.00** **Film:** Before the Winter Chill (2013) **11.40** Natural World **12.40** Hunt v Lada: F1's Greatest Racing Rivals **1.40** The Tea Trail with Simon Reeve **2.40** Art, Passion & Power: The Story of the Royal Collection **3.40** Close

ITV2
12.25 Take Me Out **1.45** The Voice UK **3.20** **Film:** The Flintstones (1994) **4.20** FYI Daily **4.25** **Film:** The Flintstones (1994) **5.05** **Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003) **6.05** FYI Daily **6.10** **Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003) **9.00** Ibiza Weekender **10.00** Family Guy **11.30** American Dad! **12.30** **Film:** Zack and Miri Make a Porno (2008) **1.30** FYI Daily **1.35** **Film:** Zack and Miri Make a Porno (2008) **2.25** Teleshopping **5.55** ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV3
11.55 Foyle's War **6.00** Agatha Christie's Marple **8.00** Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs **9.00** Tonight at the London Palladium **10.00** Birds of a Feather **11.00** **Film:** The Sting (1973) **1.30** Blue Murder **2.50** Rosemary & Thyme **3.40** Road to Avonlea **5.25** On the Buses **5.55** ITV3 Nightscreen

ITV4
12.00 **Film:** Superman (1978) **1.20** FYI Daily **1.25** **Film:** Superman (1978) **3.00** **Film:** Police Academy 3: Back in Training (1986) **4.00** FYI Daily **4.05** **Film:** Police Academy 3: Back in Training (1986) **4.40** **Film:** Ferris Bueller's Day Off (1986) **5.40** FYI Daily **5.45** **Film:** Ferris Bueller's Day Off (1986) **6.45** Hornblower **9.00** **Film:** Unknown (2011) **10.05** FYI Daily **10.10** **Film:** Unknown (2011) **11.20** **Film:** Scarface (1983) **12.20** FYI Daily **12.25** **Film:** Scarface (1983) **2.35** **Film:** Proectors **3.00** Teleshopping

E4
11.00 Melissa & Joey **1.30** **Film:** Escape from Planet Earth (2013) **3.10** Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **3.30** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** **Film:** Lockout (2012) **10.55** The Big Bang Theory **11.55** Gogglebox **2.05** Rude Tube **3.00** First Dates **3.50** Hollyoaks

Film4
11.00 Support Your Local Sheriff! (1969) **1.00** Stuart Little 2 (2002) **2.35** One Fine Day (1990) **4.45** Cheaper by the Dozen 2 (2005) **6.40** A Good Year (2006) **9.00** Avatar (2009) **12.10** Priest (2011) **1.55** Les Combattants (2014) **4.00** Close

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY

A Stranger with My Kids, Channel 5, 3.15pm

Single mother Karen hires male nanny Alex to help with her two young sons, but he has other plans and wants her family as his own. Thriller, starring Ashley Scott and Mitch Ryan. (2017)

TUESDAY

Dance Night Obsession, Channel 5, 3.15pm

A professional dancer on a popular TV competition is murdered and one of her colleagues seems to have a mysterious stalker who is intent on forcing her off the show, but it soon becomes clear the killer wants her dead too. Thriller, starring Sabrina Bryan. (2016)

WEDNESDAY

The Danish Girl, ITV, 10.45pm

Artist Gerda Wegener unveils a portrait of her husband Einar dressed as a woman in 1920s Copenhagen. Einar realises that the woman in the painting is his true identity, and decides to become one of the first people to undergo sex reassignment surgery. Period drama based on David Ebershoff's novel inspired by the true story of artist Lili Elbe, starring Eddie Redmayne and an Oscar-winning Alicia Vikander. (2015)



Drive, Friday, BBC2, 11.05pm

THURSDAY

Driven Underground, Channel 5, 3.15pm

After her teenage daughter becomes a key witness to a mob killing and she suspects a leak inside the police force, a single mother takes her family to live in Oregon. However, as they struggle to adjust to their new life, both the police and the killers start a nationwide search for them. Drama, starring Kristy Swanson, Emily Tennant and Lochlyn Munro. (2015)

FRIDAY

Drive, BBC2, 11.05pm

A stuntman who moonlights as a getaway driver tries to protect the wife and child of an imprisoned criminal. When the convict is released, the driver tries to convince him to give up his life of crime for his family's sake, but when they work together on a robbery, they end up drawn into a conflict with the Mafia. Crime drama, with Ryan Gosling, Carey Mulligan and Bryan Cranston. (2011)

Honouring the best of the best in the TV world

We love the Oscars, Golden Globes and Emmys - the Baftas aren't half bad either.

But our favourite film or TV-related gong-giving ceremony of all has to be The National Television Awards.

Why? The answer is simple: because every award is voted for by the people who really count - those of us who tune in at home.

Forget the critics or the contributors' fellow cast and crew members, it's the folk who watch the shows whose opinions count the most, because without them, there would be no programmes to start off with.

So if your favourite doesn't bag a trophy on the night, you only have yourself to blame for not backing them.

Many critics believe we're in a golden age of TV, and it's hard to disagree with them. The rise and rise of on demand services means that big guns such as the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Sky have had to raise their games to compete with Netflix and Amazon.

As a result, we've seen some cracking shows this year, from the final instalment of Broadchurch to a fond farewell to Peter Capaldi's tenure in Doctor Who, not to mention The Great British Bake Off's move to Channel 4.

Many believed that the latter would be a flop after original hosts Mel Giedroyc and Sue Perkins and judge Mary Berry quit. However, their replacements - Sandi Toksvig, Noel Fielding and Prue Leith - have more than filled their shoes and, if anything, the programme is better than ever.

Bake Off is in the running for the Challenge Show title, and if it doesn't beat Love Island, MasterChef and I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here! we'll eat our hats, providing they're covered in spun sugar and don't have soggy bottoms, of course.

The biggest change in the proceedings comes with the creation of a Crime Drama category to reflect just how many such shows are produced these days - as well as their overwhelming popularity.

Broadchurch, Line of Duty, Little Boy Blue and Sherlock are all in the running, but it's left the good, old-fashioned Drama section a little light on quality, with Call the Midwife, Casualty, Doctor Foster, Game of Thrones and Liar as the nominees.

All are decent enough, but with less to choose from it's what's missing that is baffling - where are Taboo, The Moorside and Three Girls, for starters?

But then that can often be the joy of such ceremonies - the arguing about who or what is missing, and who or what should have been the winner; it's the kind of debate between friends that can last a very long time indeed.

Phillip Schofield, Tom Hardy, Sheridan Smith, David Tennant, Peter Kay's Car Share, Gogglebox, Loose Women and Coronation Street are also up for awards on the night.

Another change involves renaming one trophy The Bruce Forsyth Entertainment Award after the legendary performer.

PICK OF THE WEEK



The National Television Awards 2018, Tuesday, ITV, 7.30pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY

Surgeons: At the Edge of Life BBC2, 9pm

Although not for the squeamish, let alone those who have a procedure planned in the next few months, this documentary series has been riveting. It concludes with an episode entitled The Pioneers, which focuses on some of the clinical trials being carried out at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham. Cameras track three trials at the vanguard of medicine, on donor livers, implantable microphones and prostate cancer, while viewers learn what it's like to take part in this kind of experimental treatment - for both surgeons and patients. With specialist fixed-rig cameras, head-cams and microscope feeds, we once more learn more about the miracles that take place on Britain's operating tables every single day. Once again, it proves that for sheer drama, these particular theatres take some beating.

TUESDAY

Love and Hate Crime BBC1, 10.45pm

This fascinating series originated on BBC3 and offers an insight into some of the hate crimes committed in the US every year. Last week focused on a young man who murdered his lover in a fit of

rage after discovering she was transgender. This time the focus is on the murder of James Anderson, a black man who was mowed down by a gang of white youths travelling in a truck; an incident described as a modern-day lynching by the media. Here, cameras follow the story of 18-year-old Sarah Graves, who was in the vehicle, as she faces trial. There's also an insight into how what has happened has impacted on her family and how she became involved with a racist group, as well as a look at the case from the perspective of the police and Anderson's loved ones.

WEDNESDAY

Stealing Van Gogh BBC2, 9pm

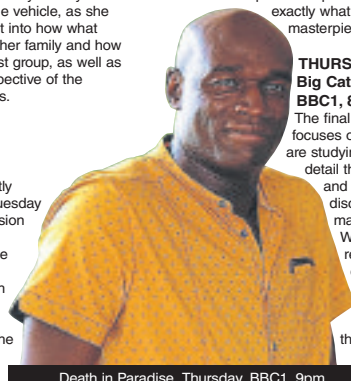
Andrew Graham-Dixon is currently appearing on BBC Four every Tuesday evening as presenter of Art, Passion & Power: The Story of the Royal Collection, but he's also found the time to front this fascinating documentary. It takes an in-depth look at the true story behind the greatest art heist of the 21st century to date, which involved the theft of two valuable paintings from the Van Gogh Museum in

Amsterdam in December 2002; they were eventually recovered in Naples more than a decade after the crime took place. Graham-Dixon's exploration takes him across Europe where he meets the detectives involved in cracking the case, as well as art experts and prosecutors who reveal exactly what happened to the masterpieces.

THURSDAY

Big Cats BBC1, 8pm

The final documentary focuses on the scientists who are studying wild cats in more detail than ever before - and the ground-breaking discoveries they are making. Professor Alan Wilson has been researching the cheetah, using hi-tech collars to rewrite what is understood about the fastest animal on land - revealing that its speed is



Death in Paradise, Thursday, BBC1, 9pm

not its greatest weapon. There is also a look at cat conservation, with stories including that of the Iberian lynx. Just five years ago this was considered the rarest cat on the planet. Now, thanks to a captive breeding programme, numbers are increasing in the wild. Last in the series.

Death in Paradise BBC1, 9pm

DI Mooney and the team become embroiled in the mysterious world of faith healing when a blind woman dies while being treated by renowned healer Steadman King. When it turns out the victim was poisoned, all eyes turn to Steadman and his cup of holy water. But how could the prime suspect have carried out the deed in front of an audience without anyone noticing? Meanwhile, JP is put through his paces when Pico the police dog joins the team on a week-long trial, and Florence tries to recreate some of Jack's home comforts.

FRIDAY

Costa Del Celebrity Channel 5, 8pm

Anne Diamond, Nick Owen, Ainsley Harriott, Vicki Michelle and Christine Hamilton end their Spanish adventure at a family-run vineyard during the grape harvest. Last in the series.

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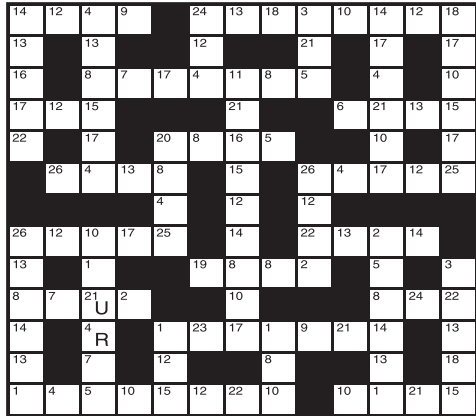
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BRAIN GYM

No.463

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	T	C	O	W	F	D	L	J	E	V	K	H	G
14	Y	U	X	A	I	M	S	R	Q	Z	P	B	N

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

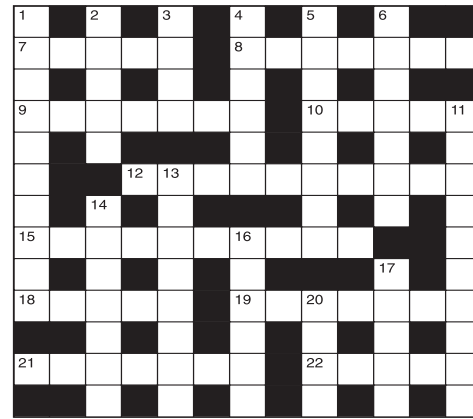
Cryptic Clues:

Across

7. Greek character featured in some games (5)
8. Not in the list of actors for "The Exile" (7)
9. & 10Ac. Finish no bar tending, in a way (5,2,2,3)
10. See 9 Across.
12. Strange silent seas are indispensable (10)
15. How the standard is raised at the passing-out parade! (2,4-4)
18. Takes a translation of the poet (5)
19. See 21 Across.
21. & 19Ac. To whom events are crystal clear? (7-7)
22. Join the forces and work in the mess (5)

Down

1. Presumably it's not for the single-minded conversationalist (6,4)
2. Right time arranged to send to another court (5)
3. Disreputable crowd to go in Scotland (4)
4. Suffering from depression - got up after the doctor is seen (6)
5. Fabulous island found when the ocean's end is changed (8)
6. Arrived with the artist's equipment for pictures (7)
11. Upset when locks have been removed? (10)
13. Has an open-air stall and disposes of the stock (5,3)
14. It provides entertainment at daytime (7)
16. Molecular structure to be of importance (6)
17. See 20 Down.
20. & 17Dn. Fail to make a red card and become discouraged (4,5)



Quick Clues:

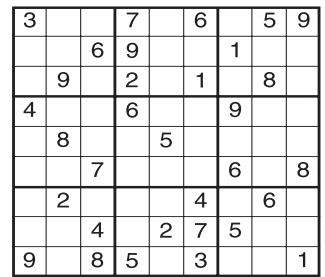
Across

7. Shove (5)
8. Notice (7)
9. Feat (7)
10. Change (5)
12. Irreverence (10)
15. All-knowing (10)
18. Unmoving (5)
19. Zeal (7)
21. Detergent (7)
22. Circular (5)

Down

1. Fawning (10)
2. Break out (5)
3. Nought (4)
4. Janitor (6)
5. Thug (8)
6. Inscribed (7)
11. Backward (10)
13. Cheeky (8)
14. Unbeliever (7)
16. Acquaint (6)
17. Fashion (5)
20. Unusual (4)

Sudoku



Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

6	5	4	7	1	2	9	3	8
7	3	9	8	4	5	1	2	6
2	8	1	9	3	6	4	7	5
9	6	2	3	5	4	7	8	1
4	1	3	6	8	7	2	5	9
8	7	5	1	2	9	6	4	3
3	4	6	2	9	8	5	1	7
5	9	8	4	7	1	3	6	2
1	2	7	5	6	3	8	9	4

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 1 Starboard; 8 Ado; 9 Seat of power; 11 Lectern; 12 Guest; 13 Orient; 15 Prison; 17 Tenet; 18 Reprove; 20 Arctic ocean; 22 Eel; 23 Dissenter. Down: 2 Tie; 3 Broke; 4 Alpine; 5 Dowager; 6 Barber's pole; 7 Constance; 10 Auction sale; 11 Lion-tamer; 14 Noticed; 16 Armies; 19 Probe; 21 Aye. QUICK - Across: 1 Advantage; 8 Nil; 9 Impertinent; 11 Harness; 12 Eerie; 13 Leeway; 15 Strove; 17 Cruel; 18 Cutlass; 20 Lawlessness; 22 Sol; 23 Dangerous. Down: 2 Dim; 3 Nerve; 4 Amidst; 5 Element; 6 Interrogate; 7 Blameless; 10 Perpetually; 11 Holocaust; 14 Allowed; 16 Screen; 19 Taste; 21 Sou.

Quiz

1. Which London theatre was founded in 1818 as the Coburg?
2. Who described the poorest of the poor as the lumpenproletariat?
3. Which Lost Generation novelist wrote Manhattan Transfer?
4. What is the administrative centre of Dorset?
5. Who wrote Lord of the Rings?
6. In Greek mythology, what were the fifty daughters of Doris called?
7. From what is the antibiotic melittin extracted?
8. Who, according to the Bible, said 'Ecce Homo'?
9. What does the soya bean product TVP stand for?
10. In which year was the cricket World Cup first held?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Old Moore's Almanac; 2 CS gas; 3 Eugene Ionesco; 4 Washington DC; 5 Radio 5 Live; 6 Sinclair Lewis; 7 Cardinal Wolsey; 8 Harare; 9 Louis XVI; 10 A beetle. Niner: SINGAPORE

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

163276
9245696
5648

gives a cat,
gives a type of cat,
gives cat food.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

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Hola! Mi casa es su Casa Ruiz

THE floor runs south like ley lines squiggling their way to the Antarctic. A rickety old building, off Bridgnorth's High Street, that was probably built around the time that witches were tied to chairs and soaked in rivers, houses the town's delightfully friendly tapas bar.

It's stood the test of time. Casa Ruiz has seen off young pretenders and remains a perennial favourite among Bridgnorth's gourmandising cognoscenti. It's a delightful little space: all low ceilings, mind-your-head-on-the-staircase and frilly little drapes that cover the windows as though you're in some seedy, backstreet Bilbao diner. All it needs is a pair of Vincent-and-Flavia lookalikes to dance a steamy Argentine tango and it would score 10-10 for authenticity.

Good tapas is very much about the atmosphere and the vibes were bang on when my friend and I visited Casa Ruiz for a midweek supper.

GENEROUS

Three tables were full of chat and bonhomie. Friends were telling tall stories as patatas bravas and generous glasses of Spanish red were ferried to the table. It was a back-slapping, high-fivin', belly-laughing, good-time.

The restaurant manager was fantastic. Though she'd got a good crowd in, the odds were stacked against her. An ordering issue meant half of the menus on the item – including most of the ones that we were going to choose – were off the menu. In such circumstances, you'd reasonably imagine the scores on the doors would start to plummet from a solid eight to a miserable four.

She came to our table apologising profusely and told us that it was down to an unexpectedly busy start to the week. And so we ate food that we didn't expect to

Test of time – the Casa Ruiz in Bridgnorth



Spanish surprise – chicken and chorizo tacos



eat: pulled chicken and chorizo tacos instead of shells stuffed with pork and beef, mushrooms instead of little baby squid, you know the drill. The food was decent. It wasn't great. It wasn't stand out, like the service. But it was okay.

I started with jamon iberico, cured ham produced in Spain from pigs that feasted on acorns. The ham was tender and sweet. Deep fried battered balls of cheese, ham and chorizo were less impressive.

My tacos were reasonable. The Great Bridgnorth Beef and Pork Famine of 2017 – which is ironic, given

that Casa Ruiz is above a butcher's shop. . . where's common sense and a quick visit to the shops when you need it? – meant a new version was making its debut. The chef had knocked up a pulled chicken and chorizo stew with a few beans and veg, then stuffed them into some of El Paso's finest shells. Pots of salsa and cheese with a few strategically placed corn chips were served alongside it. It was fine, the sort of thing people whip up at home.

My friend's plan to order a smorgasbord of fish dishes was scuppered by The Great Bridgnorth Fish Famine of

2017 – yeah, yeah, yeah, which is odd because. . . but she soldiered on. Prawns were plump like a fat man's fingers, mushrooms were earthy like an autumn wood and her bowl of patatas bravas was towering. We stayed for pud. A baked strawberry cheesecake was light, fruity and sweet. And an almond tart was equally delicious.

Great service elevates Casa Ruiz's score from a six to an eight – the restaurant manager was THAT good. When service is that warm and sincere, it doesn't really matter if the kitchen and the delivery man can't quite get it together.

ANDY RICHARDSON

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This generously-sized property has so much to offer. It includes a porch, an imposing entrance hallway, three reception rooms, a hand-crafted kitchen/diner, an attractive guest W/C, utility room, three double bedrooms, two bathrooms, a double garage and an enormous gravelled driveway to the front.

In more detail, the porch has tiled flooring, a timber frame door and folding doors leading to the imposing entrance hallway. This has stairs to the first floor and cornering to the ceiling rail. Off this, the stunning living room has a leaded window to the front and a bay window to the side, giving extensive open views, plus an attractive feature fireplace.

The sitting room has a window to the front, a gas fire and a storage cupboard. Again having a feature fireplace, the dining room has a window seat in a bay window to the side. There is also a storage cupboard and guest WC.

The bespoke fitted kitchen has a range of wall and base units, wooden work tops, an island with an integrated drawers and granite work top, a window to the side and double built-in storage cupboards. Off this is the pantry. To complete the ground floor is a rear hallway with tiled flooring and a utility room.

On the first floor, bedroom one has a side window, doors to under eaves storage and a walk-in wardrobe and en-suite. Bedroom two has a picture rail, side window, access to under eaves storage and an en-suite. Bedroom three has a built-in wardrobe and access to under eaves storage.

Outside there is a garage with sliding doors to the front and overhead storage. The side and rear gardens feature attractive mature shrubs and raised beds and borders, a paved patio seating area with extensive distant open views and lawns.

SEDGLEY £575,000



TO VIEW THIS PROPERTY

AGENT: Taylors Estate Agents

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KEY FEATURES

Period detached family residence

Exquisitely presented

3 double bedrooms

2 bathrooms

Handcrafted kitchen/diner



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Naseby Drive, Halesowen, B63£1,200 pcm+Fees
●● 1ST MONTHS RENT HALF PRICE. DONT MISS OUT ON THIS OFFER ●● A superb modern detached family home in a quiet cul de sac on the Squirrels estate. Reception hallway, guest cloakroom, spacious lounge leading to dining room, fitted kitchen, 3 good size bedrooms & family shower room, gas central heating, double glazed, large driveway, carport & garage. New carpets to be fitted downstairs & redecorated. EPC: D



Lutley Ave, Halesowen, B63£1,000 pcm+Fees
A modern individually designed 3 bedroom detached house with a lovely wooded rear aspect to Lutley, the spacious accommodation comprises of: Large open plan living room and French doors leading to a decking area, contemporary kitchen with oven/hob & dishwasher, utility room, downstairs WC, 3 large size bedrooms with master bedroom en-suite, beautiful modern bathroom with shower. EPC: B



Narrow Lane, Halesowen, B62£995 pcm+Fees
A FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITY to rent this semi detached large family home which has been totally refurbished to a very high standard including a new block paved driveway in this very popular location close to all bus & train links. 2 large reception rooms, beautiful fitted kitchen, utility, private rear garden, 3 good sized bedrooms, family bathroom with shower. AVAILABLE SOON!! EPC: TBC



Racemeadow Crescent, Netherton, DY2£750 pcm+Fees
A lovely modern 3 bedroom detached house in a popular area close to schools and transport links. With entrance hall, large lounge, separate dining room, kitchen with appliances, downstairs w.c., south facing rear garden, 3 good sized bedrooms, master en-suite & fitted wardrobes, family bathroom, gas central heating & double glazed. A large corner plot with garage & driveway parking. A beautiful property not to be missed!! EPC: B



Bettina Close, Nuneaton, CV10£750 pcm+Fees
Well presented modern 3 bedroom link detached house in a quiet cul de sac position featuring: Spacious lounge/dining area, fitted kitchen with appliances, conservatory, lovely maintenance free garden, 3 bedrooms, family bathroom with shower, garage & driveway for 2 cars. EPC: TBC



Ashville Drive, Halesowen, B63£725 pcm+Fees
An unfurnished detached house in a popular area, briefly comprising of: gas central heating, 2 reception rooms, fitted kitchen, downstairs wc, 3 bedrooms, bathroom with shower, front & rear gardens, garage & driveway parking, within easy reach of Halesowen College & town centre, available now EPC: B



Millenium Gardens, Cradley Heath, B64£715 pcm+Fees
Modern 3 bedroom semi detached house, entrance hall, downstairs wc, lounge, kitchen with oven/hob, conservatory, rear garden, 1 double & 2 single bedrooms, family bathroom, separate W.C, allocated parking for 2 cars. Furniture in bedroom can be removed if needed. EPC: D



Walker Avenue, Brierley Hill, DY5£675 pcm+Fees
A modern semi-detached house offering spacious family which has been re-furnished in the last 3 months. This large family home features an entrance hallway, large lounge, fitted kitchen, 3 good size bedrooms, new bathroom with shower, driveway parking & garage. EPC: D



Wychbury Road, Brierley Hill, DY5£650 pcm+Fees
●● 1ST MONTHS RENT HALF PRICE! DONT MISS OUT ON THIS OFFER ●● This lovely semi detached house is ideally located for Merry Hill, Thorns College and local primary schools. Featuring an extended lounge & kitchen, dining area, 3 good bedrooms, house bathroom with shower, tandem garage, front and rear gardens, central heating and double glazing. EPC: D



Sanderson Place, Halesowen, B63£650 pcm+Fees
●● 1ST MONTHS RENT HALF PRICE. DONT MISS OUT ON THIS OFFER ●● Luxury living in Hayley Green. A superb ground floor apartment offering spacious accommodation including open plan lounge/kitchen and diner, 2 double bedrooms, master with en-suite, further well appointed bathroom with shower, gas central heating, double glazing and allocated parking. EPC: B



Graingers Lane, Cradley Heath, B64£625 pcm+Fees
●● NOBODY HAS LIVED IN THIS PROPERTY ●● A brand new build end terrace property with 1 allocated parking space at the rear, located close to Cradley Heath Train Station and the Town Centre. Featuring 2 double bedrooms, fitted kitchen, lounge with patio doors leading to a small rear garden, downstairs WC. A property not to be missed! EPC: TBC



Dudley Road, Halesowen, B63£595 pcm+Fees
●● 1ST MONTHS RENT HALF PRICE. DONT MISS OUT ON THIS OFFER ●● A 2 bedroom detached bungalow in this very convenient location. Newly decorated with a brand new kitchen & bathroom this property offers a large lounge, fitted kitchen with oven/hob, bathroom with shower, 2 good size bedrooms, gas central heating, front & rear garden, garage & driveway. EPC: E



Allsops Close, Rowley Regis, B65£595 pcm+Fees
A very well presented unfurnished newly decorated modern 2 bedroom home in a popular residential location. Accommodation comprises of lounge with patio doors leading to rear tiered garden, brand new kitchen with new boiler, 1 double & 1 single bedroom and family bathroom with shower, gas central heating, allocated parking for 1 car. EPC: D



Victoria Road, Halesowen, B62£575 pcm+Fees
Well presented and not to be missed. Set within a popular residential area close to Blackheath Town Centre, this unfurnished semi detached house comprises of a modern living room, fitted kitchen, 3 bedrooms, house bathroom with shower. Benefits also include gas central heating, rear garden, driveway parking. EPC: TBC



Milverton Close, Halesowen, B63£575 pcm+Fees
A modern part furnished to suit 2 bedroom ground floor flat in this very popular residential area comprising of: large lounge, 2 double bedrooms, fitted kitchen with appliances, bathroom with shower, gas central heating, parking space. EPC: D



Furnace Hill, Halesowen, B63£575 pcm+Fees
A 2 bedroom mid terrace home, being double glazed and centrally heated. The accommodation is suitably located for nearby amenities and has accommodation to comprise a through lounge / dining room, fitted kitchen, 1 double and 1 single bedrooms, 1st floor bathroom and enclosed rear garden. EPC: TBC



Princess Crescent, Halesowen, B63£575 pcm+Fees
An unfurnished modern 1st floor apartment in a sought after cul-de-sac location. Featuring electric storage heating, good size living room, fitted kitchen, 2 good size bedrooms, bathroom with shower, communal garden, garage & driveway parking. EPC: F



Hagley Road, Halesowen, B63£550 pcm+Fees
Semi detached house in central Halesowen. This property has 2 large double bedrooms, reception room, kitchen with hob, microwave & fridge, utility room, downstairs bathroom with separate shower, rear garden, gas central heating, double glazed. NO PARKING. NO ACCESS TO FRONT RECEPTION AS FORMALLY A SHOP. EPC: TBC



Purlin Wharf, Netherton, Dudley, DY2£550 pcm+Fees
A very presentable unfurnished top floor apartment on this popular development overlooking the canal featuring 2 double bedrooms, spacious lounge, fitted kitchen with oven/hob and washer/dryer, master bedroom with en-suite, family bathroom with shower, double glazing, electric storage heating, one allocated parking space. Viewing highly recommended. EPC: C



Hingley Court, Cradley Heath, Old Hill, B64£495 pcm+Fees
In the centre of Old Hill. This lovely 1st floor apartment features an open plan lounge/kitchen with a washer/dryer and fridge freezer, 2 large double bedrooms, modern bathroom with shower, 1 allocated parking space behind electric gates. Not to be missed. Available now. EPC: TBC



Causeway Green Road, Oldbury, B68£450 pcm+Fees
Deceptively large and spacious! A split level apartment above local shops, within walking distance to bus links for Langley and Oldbury and close to J2 of the M5 comprises gas central heating, spacious living room, fitted kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, bathroom with shower, parking to rear, with the added bonus of a porch, unfurnished. EPC: D

PROPERTY



Four-bedroomed family home with large gardens

An exceptional family home, Beulah in Clarks Grove, Tipton, is for sale through Connells estate agents at £400,000 with no chain.

**TIPTON
£400,000**

Previous planning permission was granted for an extra three properties on the site.

It has an entrance hall, a downstairs bathroom, a lounge, a dining area, a kitchen with a gas oven with an electric hob and cooker hood, plumbing for a washing

machine and a door to the side. There is also a conservatory and a downstairs bedroom with en-suite to the ground floor.

Upstairs there is bedroom one with wardrobes, bedroom two and bedroom three, plus a shower room.

Outside wrought iron gates open to the driveway and parking area with brick buildings and a carport and gardens.

This home is set in large grounds and is close to transport links, making it ideal for commuting. The rear garden has a lawned area with various borders and shrubs.

For further information contact Connells on 01384 214 770 or visit www.connells.co.uk



Six-bedroomed family house in popular location

A modern, individual and architect designed spacious six-bedroomed family residence in Park Hall Road, Walsall, lies in a pleasant position in a highly regarded residential area.

It is for sale through Fraser Wood Estate Agents at £699,000.

The property is well served by all amenities including a good range of both private and state schools for children of all ages, public transport services to neighbouring centres and Junction 7 of the M6

**WALSALL
£699,000**

motorway is within approximately 5km distance.

The superbly appointed and spaciouly proportioned accommodation includes an entrance porch, a reception hall, a guest cloakroom/wet room, a front lounge with a bay window and a wall-mounted plasma fire, a rear

sitting room with a Minster-style fireplace housing a coal-effect gas fire and French doors to the family room/breakfast kitchen. There is also a study and a laundry room on the ground floor.

Upstairs is the master bedroom, an en-suite shower room and five further bedrooms, a luxury bathroom, an extensive block paved driveway, four-car garaging and a magnificent rear garden to enjoy.

Contact the selling agents on 01922 627686.

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Practical, elegant and well-priced

By John Griffiths

Skoda's Octavia is a familiar sight on our roads and, even if you haven't driven one, you may have pondered the reasons why.

Price, of course, is one reason – a big, family car for the price of a modest hatchback – plus reliability and longevity, as demonstrated by its popularity with private hire firms whose drivers depend on it for their living.

Latest versions have undergone a few design tweaks which have endowed it with a more upmarket visual appeal, while there's also some new engine choices which increase its financial appeal, too.

The £20,030 test car (the price includes optional extras) was a hatchback in SE trim, powered by the VW Group's new 1.0 litre, three cylinder petrol engine.

Capable of almost 60mpg with a low 110g/km CO2 rating, it must be one of the most economical petrol car of its size to run. A low 14E insurance rating will help, too. That's a big selling point at a time when for various reasons, diesel car sales have fallen by a third.

But is 1.0 litre enough for a car which is bigger than a VW Golf or Vauxhall Astra?

Well that's a resounding 'yes' from me. Forget conventional 1,000cc engines you may have driven in the past – this one is turbocharged and it makes all the difference.

Many manufacturers now have smaller, turbo engines as a means of improving fuel economy; they're less wasteful under light load or when cruising, but the extra and power (115PS) torque (in this case 200Nm) gives it the get up and go necessary for driveability, both practically and in the driver's mind.

The figures tell part of the story (0 to 62mph

in 9.9 seconds) but of course there's more to it. Fitted, with a six-speed gearbox well matched to the engine, the big Octavia feels lively off the mark and around town, yet is thoroughly civilised at motorway speeds – smooth, refined and with barely a whisper from under the bonnet.

In that way, the car lives up to its latest, premium class looks.

The ride is comfortable too, absorbing the shock (and sound) of less than perfect roads while maintaining the dynamism to tackle twisting roads with confidence.

The official (laboratory test) economy figure is 58.9mpg but I was well satisfied with my 49.2mpg achieved after an 80 mile run at motorway speeds plus several miles of crawling stop/start traffic (neither of which is conducive to maximum economy).

Practical and elegant, the Octavia seats five adults in comfort plus room for their luggage – in the hatchback model tested there is 590 litres of space, which extends to 1,580 litres with the rear seats folded down. To put that in context, it's bigger than a Ford Mondeo or a Mercedes E-Class, and a match for some mid-size estates.

It's well equipped, too, even in the second tier SE trim car tested. Dual zone air conditioning, a central colour touchscreen for satnav (an £800 option which also includes Wifi) and infotainment, including connectivity, a multi-device interface and voice control.

Electric windows and heated door mirrors, and a multi-function driver information panel (including navigation prompts) between the digital instrument displays are also part of the package.

Driver aids include a tyre pressure monitor,



Premium class looks and the car seats five adults in comfort with room for their luggage

rear parking sensors, driver fatigue sensor, four switchable driving modes (eco, comfort, sport and custom), a 'hill hold' system and cruise control.

The safety package is comprehensive too, from multiple airbags to a range of electronic wizardry including traction, stability and braking systems.

The list price of the 1.0 SE test car (before optional extras) is £18,500 while the range starts at just £17,195 for the entry-level S version which, all things considered, makes it tremendously competitive both for the private buyer and the fleet market.

Other engine options include the VW Group's new 1.5TSI petrol unit and 1.6 and 2.0

litre turbo diesels. At the top of the tree sits the high performance vRS powered by a 2.0 litre turbocharged engine, turning out 245PS fitted and mated to a seven-speed automated 'DSG' gearbox. The £29,485 car is naturally the best equipped of the range as well as being the quickest, with 0 to 62mph sprint time of 6.6 seconds.



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Stylish Mazda CX-3 is delight to drive

By Carmel Stewart

The award-winning CX-3 is the first compact SUV/crossover from Mazda. Originally launched in 2015 into what is still a highly competitive automotive sector, the latest version adds a few goodies to keep the momentum going.

Mazda has delayed jumping on to the blue/green alternative fuel source bandwagon to concentrate on its SkyActiv programme which focuses on producing ever increasing lightweight fuel-efficient combustion engines as its way of tackling the increasing problem of emissions.

Over the next few years Mazda plans to reduce its CO2 emissions still further so that by 2030 it has achieved a 50 per cent reduction over where it was in 2010. By 2050 a 90 per cent reduction is the target.

Although a vast quantity of automotive eggs are being placed in the electric vehicle basket, Mazda sees the future as being with more efficient combustion units. It recognises that by 2013 electric vehicles will be far more dominant in the market but the base power source will continue to be either petrol or diesel combustion so Mazda will be launching its own electric vehicle in 2019 and a hybrid in 2021 which will do just that.

Meanwhile, the CX-3 engines line-up sticks to the traditional, comprising as it does, a 2.0litre 120ps and 150ps petrol unit and a 1.5litre 105ps diesel. Between 44mpg and 49mpg can be extracted from the petrols but for real economy the turbo charged diesel has to be the first choice, producing as it does an official 70.6mpg while puthering out 105g/km of CO2 emissions.

It is this diesel unit which has been given



The latest version gets a few goodies

a serious update with the addition of what Mazda calls 'transient control', a clever piece of tweaking which ensures a more positive throttle response by reducing turbo lag and boosting torque.

The engine has also benefited from the introduction of Mazda's Natural Sound Smoother (NSS) technology which, thanks to a dynamic damper inside the piston pin, suppresses resonance from the piston and connecting rod to reduce knock noise during starting and low-speed acceleration – so now you know.

Trims SE Nav and SE-L Nav are all 2WD. For AWD a step up to Sports Nav is required.

Prices start at £18,695 for the 2.0litre 120ps petrol, SE Nav, rising to £25,195 for the 1.5litre 105ps diesel, AWD auto Sport Nav. That may, at first, seem a high starting price but Mazda has included a generous standard spec to ease the pain. Every model comes with alloy wheels, sat nav, air con, DAB radio, Bluetooth, cruise control and seven-inch colour screen.



There's plenty of power, seamlessly delivered, excellent road-holding and well-tuned suspension

For those delicious heated front seats, rear parking sensors, lane departure warning and front fog lights, a step up to SE-L Nav is required.

Sports Nav adds 18-inch alloys, leather inset sports seats, Bose sound system, keyless entry, a heated steering wheel and a head-up display which, for me, is worth every penny of the additional cost.

The revised line-up includes the limited edition GT Sport which adds a little aesthetic

oomph to what was already a very drivable, attractive vehicle with excellent short-throw gearing. It comes with the same kit as the Sport Nav plus a 120ps petrol engine, an aero styling kit, black rear roof spoiler, fancy silver alloys, a Nappa leather interior and a £22,895 price tag.

All models in the revised Mazda CX-3 range feature a new steering wheel and a more extensively soundproofed cabin.

But Mazda's research is not confined to engineering and soundproofing. It has a whole

team dedicated to studying the human body and how best its seats can accommodate the varying sizes and shapes of its customers to ensure backs and legs are well supported.

The revised range benefits from 'slightly altered' damper settings, enhanced torque vectoring and recalibrated power steering. As a result, the stylish CX-3 is an absolute delight to drive with plenty of power, seamlessly delivered, excellent road holding and well-tuned suspension.

Peugeot 3008 bags best family car in UK awards

The Peugeot 3008 SUV has scooped the award for the Best Family Car in the UK Car of the Year Awards 2018, the 15th award it has won in the UK since the vehicle's launch.

The multi-award winning 3008 SUV impressed the judges with its sophisticated style, premium feel and practicality.

Game-changing

It was also described as a class-leading car and was highly praised for its "game-changing" dashboard design which forms part of the innovative Peugeot i-Cockpit®. The technology that makes up the Peugeot i-Cockpit® offers a more intuitive and engaging driving experience, with a compact multi-function steering wheel, 12.3" head-up digital instrument display and 8.0" capacitive touchscreen with Mirror Screen® functionality comprising of Android Auto, Apple CarPlay™ and Mirror Link®.

The award means that the Peugeot 3008 SUV is automatically shortlisted for the overall UK Car of the Year award, the winner of which will be announced on February 23.

The UK Car of the Year Award was established in 2014 and is voted for by a panel of 27 leading motoring journalists.

David Peel, managing director at Peugeot UK, said: "Winning the Best Family Car in the UK Car of the Year Awards is a fantastic achievement. In a particularly competitive sector,



The 3008 is now shortlisted for the overall UK Car of the Year

the 3008 SUV proved its suitability for families with its combination of robustness and elegance.

"This award adds to the collection of over 30 international awards that the 3008 SUV has won since it went on sale in 2017.

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Regis was a popular player in the colours of Albion, Villa and Wolves in a glittering career that saw him lift the FA Cup and play for England

The Baggies so-called Three Degrees with the musical group in the 1970s



Regis meets fans at King's Square indoor market



Brendon Batson and Regis with a relative of Laurie Cunningham

RIP Big Cyrille – football legend and a gentleman

TRIBUTES have continued to pour in from fans all over the world following the death of football legend Cyrille Regis.

The 59-year-old passed away on Sunday night of a heart attack.

Born on February 9, 1958, to Robert and Mathilde Regis in French Guiana, his father moved to Britain, with Regis and the rest of his family following a year later. They initially pitched up in the Portobello Road area before later moving to Stonebridge.

A talented sportsman, Regis impressed in football, cricket and athletics at Cardinal Hinsley School (Haresden) and was called up to the Borough of Brent Boys' football team. He was offered a trial by Chelsea, but was unable to attend due to injury.

Regis trained as an electrician – a trade he continued until becoming a professional footballer – and played Sunday League football for Ryder Brent Valley and Oxford & Kilburn Boys.

He began to bang in the goals following a move to London amateur club Molesey in 1975/76 and when he repeated the feat at Hayes the following season, Albion came calling.

Important

The 19-year-old was spotted by Baggies chief scout Ronnie Allen and a deal was reached to buy Regis for £5,000 in May 1977, with another £5,000 once he reached 20 appearances. Laurie Cunningham had joined two months earlier, Brendon Batson would sign soon after – they would become three of the most important figures in the club's history and christened The Three Degrees by boss Ron Atkinson.

Allen took over from Johnny Giles as manager and handed the striker his debut in a League Cup tie on August 31, 1977 against Rotherham – and Regis scored twice in a 4-0 win. Three days later, he was on the scoresheet in a 2-1 league victory over Middlesbrough. Regis ended that first campaign with 10 goals in 34 league games – and six more in the FA Cup as Albion finished sixth and reached the semi-final, with Atkinson having replaced Allen in January 1978. In 1978/79 Albion finished third in the First Division and reached the quarter-finals of the UEFA Cup.

After 13 goals in 39 league appearances Regis was voted PFA Young Footballer of the Year. The Three

SPORTING FEATURE

By Matt Wilson

“Losing him has turned my whole world upside down. It is a void that will never be filled.”

Degrees were broken up ahead of the 1979/80 season with Cunningham sold to Real Madrid. With Regis sidelined early on, he would only net eight league goals. Albion finished 10th and exited the cups early.

Fortunes improved in 1980/81 as Regis bagged 14 times in 38 league matches, lifting the Baggies to fourth and a return to the UEFA Cup. Regis' tally of 17 goals in 37 league matches was his best at Albion and he finished second in the Footballer of the Year vote behind Tottenham's Steve Perryman.

He also won the first of five England caps in a 4-0 win over Northern Ireland at Wembley, becoming the third black player to be capped by England after Viv Anderson and Cunningham.

Regis left The Hawthorns in 1984 with 112 goals in 302 games. His eight seasons in Baggies colours were followed by a further seven down the road at Coventry City, where he won the FA Cup in 1987.

Having netted 47 goals in 238 games for Coventry, Regis was reunited with Atkinson at Villa in 1991 – becoming Big Ron's first signing at Villa Park.

He netted on his debut again in a 3-2 success over Sheffield Wednesday and found the net 11 times that season as Villa finished seventh and reached the sixth round of the FA Cup. His minutes were limited the following season – particularly following the £2.3million arrival of Dean Saunders – and his only goal of the campaign would arrive in a 2-1 victory over Nottingham Forest in December 1992.

With his career winding down, he crossed the divide for the old gold and black of Wolves, later dropping through the divisions to play for Wycombe Wanderers and Chester City in Division Three before finally call-

ing time in 1996. After his playing career ended Regis also awarded an honorary fellowship by the University of Wolverhampton in 2001 before becoming a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in 2008.

As well as working in a range of coaching roles, he became an accredited football agent – including for his nephew Jason Roberts – and continued charity work with wife Julia, including for WaterAid. His legacy continues to inspire footballers of all races today.

Regis leaves behind widow Julia, two children and three grandchildren. In a statement released by Albion, Julia Regis described the 59-year-old legend as her 'soulmate', a 'beautiful man' and 'a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, brother and uncle'.

She said: "Losing him has turned my whole world upside down. It is a void that will never be filled. He was a role model for so many because he always treated everyone he met with kindness and respect."

Albion chairman John Williams said: "Everyone will have their precious memories of him as a family man, as a crusader against bigotry – which can never be under-estimated – and as a man who threw considerable energy into a series of worthy causes."

Respected

"But for me, I will never forget Cyrille the footballer – a wonderful, wonderful player who had everything and who defenders of the time would have hated facing."

Geoff Snape, secretary of West Brom's Former Players Association said: "A legend, a word that is sometimes used too frivolously but in the case of Big C it was a word that summed him up, a really nice guy, respected by his colleagues."

Tearful Ally Robertson, a former team-mate and close friend, said: "I'm heartbroken. Cyrille is a true great. He was the ultimate gentleman. I cannot believe he has gone."

Steve Bull joined in the tributes, describing his former Wolves team-mate as "a man and a player I looked up to".

John Wile was captain of the trailblazing Albion side of the 70s and 80s that Regis was a part of. He said: "You wouldn't wish to meet a nicer person."

"He was just an absolute gentleman. It's a real sorry day."

Livermore won't face action over fan fracas

ALBION midfielder Jake Livermore will not face action from the FA after confronting a West Ham supporter who allegedly taunted him over the death of his infant son.

The 28-year-old England international has been reminded of his responsibility not to react to fans whatever the circumstances – though mainly for his own safety and that of innocent spectators.

Livermore became involved in an angry exchange with a supporter sitting just behind the away team's dugout at the London Stadium, after being substituted in the second half of the Baggies 2-1 loss to the Hammers on January 2.

Albion have claimed Livermore was provoked by a remark related to the death of his infant son, Jake Junior, in 2014.

West Ham have identified the fan and are currently investigating the matter. Having asked both clubs for their observations on the incident, the FA is understood to be happy with West Ham's handling of the case.

Right royal rumble as Duggan checks in

THE first-ever winner of the WWE Royal Rumble will be in the Black Country tomorrow night (Friday) ahead of the event's 30th anniversary.

American wrestling superstar 'Hacksaw' Jim Duggan will be in action at Darlaston Town Hall. He makes the trip across the pond to take top billing on a Pro Wrestling Live card staged by local promoter Matt Powell at the Victoria Road venue.

Duggan, from Glen Falls, New York, won the maiden Royal Rumble in 1988. He went on to become a WWE Hall of Famer and is still signed to the company on a Legends contract. The 63-year-old will dust off his wrestling boots, trusty 2 x 4 plank of wood and use his battle cries of 'Hooo' and 'USA' in the Black Country ring.

Tickets are available, with general admission £6.50, VIP ringside passes £12, a family of four, two adults and two children £22.

For more information, call 07404 279 880. Payment can be made on the doors, which open at 6.30pm for a 7.30pm start.

EFL Trophy on way to Wolverhampton

THE EFL Championship trophy that Wolves are currently on course to regain will be on show at a city pub next weekend.

Wolves stand top of the pile in the Championship and are on course to win the re-branded title for a second time, the last eight years ago in 2009.

Fans have the chance to see the trophy early when it arrives at the George Wallis, Victoria Street, on Saturday January 27.

Competition sponsors Sky Bet are taking the trophy on a whistle-stop tour and will be in the pub's upstairs function room from 1-3pm.

Selves and photographs with the silverware can be taken as a memento. Tables can be pre-booked, but no tickets are required and admission is free. Donations are welcome for a charity of the George Wallis' choice.

Pub mascot George the Wolf will be on hand to entertain visitors on an afternoon where Wolves are scheduled to play away.

There will be a raffle for football-themed prizes and the day's FA Cup games will be shown across the venue. Contact the pub on 01902 426892.



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Running men look destined for relegation

THE writing appears to be on the wall for the men from Dudley Kingswinford Running Club after race three of four in the Birmingham & District Cross Country League at Cofton Park on Saturday.

Already bottom of Division 2 they were hit with injury and illness meaning only nine athletes were able to start the race over three sweeping, rolling, two-mile laps of south Birmingham parkland. Steve Holdcroft was first back for the club in a very impressive 38th place in 37.08, Stuart Perkins was 63rd in 38.10, Darran Bishop finished in 129th in 40.43, Dave Norman was 158th in 42.03, Mark Homer was 193rd in 43.33 and Pete Hood competed the A team scorers in 213th in 45.02. Sergei Ljubovnikov finished in 47.12 to take 234th place, Dave Hickman was 236th in 47.16 and Andy Weaver was 256th in 49.29.

With one race remaining the male section of the blue hoops are rooted at the bottom of the table and look destined to return to the Third Division.

The female section were also at Cofton Park covering two laps of the same course and four miles in total in the Second Division of the Midland Women's League. Helen Tromans was first back in 44th place, Jacqui Elson-Whittaker was 107th in 36.27, Jane Campbell was 126th in 38.25, Jan Burbie, Kimberley Ball and Susan Barley went round together finishing in 153rd in 42.03, 154th in 42.23 and 156th in 42.28 respectively, Donna Proffitt was 166th in 43.47 and Farah Hunter-Coley was 180th in 46.18.

Twenty four hours later, former DK member Matt Biggs won the rescheduled Sneyd Christmas Pudding 10, a 10-mile two-lap race where all finishers are presented with a festive pudding. Biggs, now with Birchfield Harriers, goes from strength to strength in the all black of the Birmingham club, crossing the line in 55:43.

Ex-Baggie and old Glassboys coach dies

FORMER Albion player Archie Styles – a stalwart of the Baggies' Former Players Association – has died at the age of 78.

Styles, who was born in Smethwick on October 29, 1939, joined Albion from Smethwick Boys in 1956.

He went on to make one first-team appearance before leaving for Wrexham in 1960 and played for several non-league clubs – including Stourbridge, where he was also a coach.

A statement on the Former Players Association website read: "He said that perhaps the most enjoyable time both socially and in football terms was the times he played for the All Stars Charity side alongside Stan Jones, Bobby Hope and many more."

Styles leaves son Dean, daughter Kerry, grandchildren Tom, Shannon, Georgia, Laura and Kyle, plus four great grandchildren.

Hopes shattered by sub's late goal



Stourbridge celebrate going 2-1 up

Billericay Town 3 Stourbridge 2

A GOAL in injury time by substitute Billy Bricknell shattered the Glassboys' hopes of reaching the last 16 of the FA Trophy.

The big-spending Essex outfit had most of the first half play and led 1-0 through top scorer Jake Robinson.

Leon Broadhurst headed home a 47th minute equaliser and three minutes later, the travelling Stourbridge fans were in ecstasy when

Tom Tonks' cross was headed in by Stuart Pierpoint to seemingly turn the game round.

But Ricky Modeste equalised for Billericay on 67 minutes and in injury time Stourbridge goalkeeper Matt Gould failed to get anything on a Sam Feering corner and Bricknell netted from close range.

Stourbridge did progress to the quarter-finals of the Birmingham Senior Cup on Monday night, how-

ever, after overcoming a youthful Wolves side 2-1 at Ambleside.

Aaron Forde and Jack Duggan scored for Stourbridge with Jose Nuno Xavier pulling one back before Wolves' sub Jordan Allen missed an injury time spot-kick that could have forced a penalty shoot-out.

A minutes' silence was held for Cyrille Regis, who played for Wolves and was also a close friend of Glassboys boss Gary Hackett.

Andy nocks up his 150th appearance

RECORD-BREAKING Andy Nock notched up his 150th appearance for Halesowen Athletics & Cycling Club last weekend – the first time this feat has been achieved in the Birmingham & District Cross Country League.

Nock was racing in the third of Saturday afternoon's races at Cofton Park in what was a mixed afternoon for the club.

Halesowen's men came fifth and lie just outside the promotion race with just one meet to go. In the ladies' race Halesowen finished third. First home, in fifth, was Lilly Higgins followed by fellow junior Abigail Saker in 14th.

Masters athletes made up the rest of the team with Kerri James 41st, Melanie Hepke 47th, Rebecca Adams 51st, Julie Dale 52nd, Sally Spencer 62nd, Simone Jones 66th, Ellen Ambrose 73rd, Caroline Lambert 80th, Elish James 81st, Elizabeth Hawker 87th, Emma Higgins 117th, Anna Cosimetti 122nd and Helen Attwood 140th.

Marc Turner led the men's team home in 21st with team captain and junior athlete Peter Dear in 26th, Adam Cross 33rd, junior athlete Christian Bayley 37th, Jonathon Lewis 48th, Tom Kenderdine 55th, Dave Turvey 57th, Roger Mallard 59th, Mateusz Sliwinski 73rd, Russ Cadwallader 93rd, Paul Bradley 97th, James Houlst 128th, Dave Lewis 130th, Matt Allen 139th, Alex Morgan 189th, James Parker 206th, Andy Nock 210th, Bill Nock 238th, Paul Allen 260th, Steve Millington 267th, Steve Horton 277th and Ali Grant 281st.

Kick-off for new five-a-side league

A NEW five-a-side football league is to kick off in Stourbridge – after research showed playing the sport can help middle aged men avoid heart attacks.

A study conducted in part by Exeter University found men who played football saw their blood pressure levels drop, were at 90 per cent of their heart's maximum rate for longer and increased their resting heart rate. The competition starts at Crystal Leisure Centre on Sunday. It is open to over-16s but 5aside.co.uk wants to encourage others who may have hung up their boots years ago.

Visit <https://www.5aside.co.uk/league/crystal-leisure-centre/stourbridge-sun-day>

HALESOWEN Town fans are being urged to give towards a Crowdfunding page set up to save the embattled club.

The JustGiving page has been set up by chairman Karen Brookes to help buy the club – founded in 1873 – from its current owner and provide future financial stability.

She is looking to raise £30,000. At the time of going to press yesterday (Wednesday), 19 supporters had pledged a total of £1,170.

Contributions include anonymous donations of £500 and £100 as well as three of £50 and a £25 from an AFC Wimbledon fan.

One Yeltz fan, who donated £30, wrote: "Please help protect this historic local club, my team for over 30 years."

Supporters

In a statement on the JustGiving page Karen Brookes said: "Though in more recent years we have had more than our fair share of ups and downs, we have great fans, local community and business supporters and we are seeking financial contributions."

On the field, Halesowen slumped to their third home defeat on the trot as Joe Mwasile hit an early winner for Nantwich last Saturday.

Meanwhile, boss John Hill has added to his backroom staff by appointing former Albion midfielder Richard Sneekes as first team coach.

Elsewhere, Halas Hawks Juniors FC have joined forces in an ambitious link-up with the Evo-Stik Premier League side.

Halas currently runs 27 teams, from under-7s to adults and the idea is to provide an exit route for Hawks players after the age of 17 to play for Yeltz under-21s and first team.

Halas chairman Rob Hickman said: "Our players are excited about the potential of the link. We're not naive to think all our players will go on to play for them but if they pick up one or two it's something which can work for both parties."

Big Ron leads Regis plaudits



Tributes are laid at the gate of The Hawthorns for Baggies legend Cyrille Regis

FORMER Baggies manager Ron Atkinson led the tributes to Cyrille Regis, describing him as "the best centre-forward I ever worked with – but an even better bloke".

Regis was a key part of the Baggies team which finished third in the First Division under Atkinson in 1978/79. The pair were reunited at Villa Park after Atkinson signed Regis on a free transfer in 1991.

'Big Ron' said: "Cyrille was probably the best centre-forward I ever worked with – but he was an even better bloke than he was player."

He added: "Cyrille had these huge thighs and great power, phenomenal pace. He had a good touch as well. There wasn't a single centre-half who liked playing against him."

Shocked Baggies fans have headed down to The Hawthorns to lay wreaths and scarves at the stadium gates.

Phil Hughes, 45, from Wolverhampton, said: "I was just absolutely shocked, just could not believe it. Cyrille has always been my number one hero. Heroes don't die, they just become legends. This has shattered me."

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